Biogr. 327 f

Earle, Gilb.,

SOME ACCOUNT OF THE LIFE

OF THE LATE

GILBERT EARLE, Esq.

WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

But when return'd the youth?—the youth no more
Return'd exulting to his native shore;
But forty years were past, and then there came
A worn-out man.——CRABBE.

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PREFACE,

BY THE EDITOR.

The world always expects some apology for auto-biography;—and yet the expectation is as much a conventional matter, as the understanding between the hero of his own tale in a stage-coach, and his listeners. If the *subject* of the narrative disclose any leading movement of the great machine of the heart, and if the influence of that movement on "human dealings" be traced with any thing like "a learned spirit," the distaste for egotism vanishes in an instant, and we permit a man to talk of himself, as of some science, or art, with which he is deeply familiar. This, after all, is the test to which such narrations must be subjected;—the only value which they possess is their *truth*. It was this value which made a projector of perfecti-

bility * determine that, in his Utopia, every citizen should deposit a record of his *experience* in the national archives. He was in some measure right. There are points in which the humblest and the most obscure may have lived for example, or for caution.

The Fragments of a Life which are now offered to the world have this merit of *truth*, or they have none at all. They were placed in my hands with that feeling of reverence with which the relatives of one that was beloved, and more particularly of one that has been unhappy, are accustomed to regard his memory. It is, perhaps, with too much of deference to those feelings that these Fragments are now published. They may interest many persons, as they have interested their Editor, by their force and simplicity. But then, the absence of nearly all romantic incident,—the inartificial 'conduct of the plot,' (to use a phrase derived from the *mimicry* of *real* life)—may disgust ordinary readers; and send them from a history whose *denouement* is on the first scene, to some tale of joy or sorrow,

* Mercier.

where a series of events, each of which increases in importance, is worked up in a *natural* (quære, unnatural?) *progression*, from the cradle to the grave.

The Life of Gilbert Earle is the life of a man whose onset was wretched—made wretched by *one* false step—and whose after-career was wholly

Sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,

which that one step induced. This may not be the life which the Novelist would copy; but it is the life which we all see, and hear of, in every gradation of society.

I am not quite sure that I am rendering a service to mankind by publishing this book. It will have the effect of striking upon the heart,—and, perhaps, upon the heart whose hopes beat highest,—like the knell of departed joys. It proclaims, without intermission, the theme which one who has been called the wisest of men incessantly proclaimed, "Vanity of vanities—all is vanity." It puts before the view a bold sketch of the painful succession of ills which are entailed upon mankind by the physical change, and the moral inconstancy,—

the decay, the decrepitude, and the perishing of all earthly things. It rings in our ears that 'this is no abiding city.' It tells us, in every page, of

> —— the heavy and the weary weight
> Of all this unintelligible world.

Oh! that the world could never *thus* show itself to the young enthusiast, setting out on his career, eager and buoyant in all his golden dreams of love, and friendship, and honour, and disinterestedness; —and, what is more, believing in the *endurance* of all these! Oh! that this blight should never shrivel his spring-blossoms!—But there *is* a state of existence, and that comprehending a much wider range, to which the remains of a *withered* man, like my poor friend, may read a fitting lesson. It is the life of insensibility,—of sensual indulgence,—of blind confidence,—of bloated pride;—it is the life of all those who have built their "house on the sands." To such self-deceivers this record may be useful.

I have read over the life of Mr. Earle, more than once, with pleasure and perhaps improvement. The circumstances which consigned the manuscript

of my deceased friend to my charge may, in my view, give such parts as I shall transcribe an interest which they will not excite in others. Yet, I cannot help thinking they may have some value. I like to see the human mind in an undress. Should one of the same taste take up these Fragments, let him read on—I promise no amusement to the lovers of the marvellous or the artificial.

It may be proper to add, that one of these Fragments was published by me, in a periodical work, in 1822. The impression it produced upon some whose opinions I value, gave encouragement to the collection of this volume.

May, 1824.

SOME ACCOUNT OF THE LIFE

OF THE LATE

GILBERT EARLE, Esq.

FRAGMENT I.

* * * * * *

I FEEL that I have dwelled too long and minutely on these comparatively indifferent matters;—but I have been influenced by that very indifference itself. I have lingered and lingered among them, "to put off," as the phrase goes, "the evil day as long as possible." I have dallied with the earlier and easier portion of my task, from sheer want of courage to encounter the pain which I must suffer in its progress. For even now,—even at this distance of years,—my hand trembles, and my breath is painfully drawn, as I approach this part of my story. But, if I pause upon these feelings, I may

as well stop short where I am,—for I never shall have the nerve to go farther. I must proceed with my narrative at once, or I shall not be able to do it at all.

It was, then, at this period that I first became acquainted with her from whom my whole subsequent life has taken its colour. The first time I ever saw her was at a party at ———'s, in the October of this year.

Well—Oh, how well!—I remember every circumstance of that evening;—how well, indeed, *may* I remember them!—The first time of beholding her who afterwards becomes to us dearer than our own souls, is always one of the land-marks of our existence. We look back to it, after long years, with the vivid and minute recollection of an event of yesterday — and with all those associations of tender and holy feeling which nothing but long lapse of time can give. This is, I believe, in some degree common to all men — how strong, then, ought it to be in me!

And so it *is*, indeed. For if the scene were actually before my eyes, it could not be more present

to my mind than it is at this moment. The room was very crowded; it was a musical party, but I chanced to arrive just at the termination of a song, so that some short time passed in that general hum of conversation which commonly intervenes between the pieces of music at a concert. But, of a sudden, there was an endeavour to obtain silence—some one was going to sing. I was engaged in conversation, and did not pay much attention to the prelude, which was played on a harp. It was a simple air, just played over, as it seemed, to give the key to the singer, and to accord the instrument to the voice;—but, as I have said, I continued my conversation, heeding it but little. I happened to be speaking on some subject that interested me; and I continued talking earnestly, but, *par bienséance*, in a low tone of voice, when the singer began. I stopped instantly;—the most perfect silence by this time reigned in the room, and gave full effect to the notes of a voice clearer, fuller, and far, far, more sweet, than any I had ever heard. The song was of that style which may be termed pensive gaiety;—which may be supposed to speak the feel-

ings of one naturally joyous and buoyant, but saddened by the visitation of early sorrow. The singer gave—what is so rare—the words of the song with the utmost distinctness; and they were uttered with a truth of feeling and expression which, added to the wild, simple, and beautiful air to which they were breathed, sank to my very soul. There was, however, no *parade* of feeling—none of that displayed and spurious sensibility which so often reigns in the atmosphere of piano-fortes. The song was of a tender and regretful cast, and it was given as if the singer understood and felt it—no more. I stood motionless;—my ears were drinking in the sweetest and most touching sounds I had ever heard, and I scarcely allowed myself to breathe, lest I might impede the slightest note reaching me. My delight in music had always been something passionate—not scientific, elaborate, complex, music, which means nothing, and feels nothing, and makes nothing understood and felt—but music such as this, where Poetry and Sound join their sweetest and strongest powers to enchant the senses, and enthrall the soul.

I was so engrossed while the song lasted, that I

never thought of the singer. I was standing in a corner of the room, where I had been talking to my friend, shut in, as it were, by a pillar; so that, from the crowd of persons collected before me, I could see no more than the top of the harp. But of this I was scarcely aware, until the music had ceased, and a long deep-drawn respiration had relieved me from pleasure which had almost become oppressive. Then, I began to desire to see her from whose lips such sounds could flow, and I strove to extricate myself from the crowd. I was some little time accomplishing this—but when I did, I came at once in full sight of a creature of a beauty such as my eyes had never rested upon before. She was seated by the side of the harp, receiving the praises which were naturally being dealt forth most lavishly. Her cheek was a little flushed, and her eye glistened in a manner which shewed that she was touched by the intoxication of success, and of the consciousness of the keen admiration which she excited. But the expression of a glance which she now and then cast on those who surrounded her, and a sort of shade

which, at intervals, passed over the brightness of her countenance,—sufficed to shew that though she could not but enjoy the homage paid her, yet she fully knew how hollow and worthless it really was. This was plain to me, as I gazed upon her face of heavenly beauty;—and I was just then, as may be supposed, in no mood to judge severely. No,—I thought—I still think—those emotions of young and womanly vanity far more than outweighed by the countervailing feelings I have described. "*Succés de société*" are, beyond all things, likely and able to make giddy a youthful brain. I believe there are few who would not have enjoyed the incense as she did—I am sure there are few who at such a moment would have felt its light value, and have sighed for something far higher and better than this.

How beautiful I thought Eleanor then—how beautiful she really was!—and that, too, of a beauty exclusively, even strangely, individual. I have, during the course of my life, seen some women who were her equals—one or two who, strictly, perhaps, were her superiors, in beauty. But I

never, either before or since, knew any one, in the least degree, *like* her. Her eye, especially, was such as I never saw in any other person. It was a full, beautiful blue eye, but with all—with more than all—the fire and power of a dark one. I can see it at this moment, beaming on me with the softness of tender affection—with the flashing of passionate love. I can see it bright with the fearful brightness of agony—subdued in the melancholy mildness of sorrow.—I can see it as it curdled and froze in the coldness and dimness of death!—Oh, it is the human eye which bestows creating expression upon the human countenance!—it is that which gives the immaterial spirit to actual vision—which enables us to *see* the soul. Hence, in all our recollections of one we have loved, it is *the look* which is ever the most present—for that places her before us, body and mind at once. Yes, I can see her now—her tall and rounded form, possessed beyond all others of that grace of motion which adds such charm to accuracy of shape, where it exists,—and almost supplies its place to us, where it does not;—her face of more than earthly love-

liness, with its bright, clustering hair, and its clear, pale, pearl-like, complexion—varied on occasion with a flush of rich blood, of a tint like that presented by the interstices of the fingers when held against the sun; —and, above all, the deep and magical effect of her general image;—all, all are now before me in that full, lavish, luxuriance of beauty which was hers when my eyes rested upon her for the first time.

She was sitting, as I have said, by the side of the harp; which gave, as it were, token and remembrance of the exquisite sounds she had drawn from it, and of those she had superadded. She had all the advantages of dress:—the perfect and exquisite whiteness of her skin was given to view—her full and rounded arm was uncovered—and her bright beautiful hair was fastened with a knot of diamonds. I thought then she never could be so lovely as when full dressed;—I afterwards thought that in simple unadornment she was more lovely still. But I found the reality to be—(and in a truly beautiful woman it always is so)—that the dress in which she is before our eyes is that in which we think she

looks the best. At night the brilliancy of dress appears to us most suited to her beauty;—in the morning, we become converts to the plain white gown, and that indescribable loveliness of complexion, which a perfect, but still a healthy, paleness possesses by daylight;—and, when night returns again, she again seems to eclipse her simpler self, and we revert to our former creed.

To some people, perhaps, these minutiæ of merely personal reminiscence may appear trivial;—but, in despite of all that has been philosophized about the worthlessness and fragility of beauty,—who, that has once felt its power, will deem it of light regard?—Who, that has ever loved a talented and beautiful woman, has not experienced what vast additional effect loveliness of person gives to powers of mind? Old as I now am, and sad and suffering as the greater part of my life has been, my blood still rises, my heart still swells, at the recollection of the effect of *this* beauty upon me, in the days of my burning youth.

It was thus,—in beauty and in brightness—in the midst of music, and revelry and rejoicing—

surrounded by crowding flatterers and friends, and beaming with all the pride of gifted loveliness—it was thus that I first saw Eleanor—thus was she when we met:—I last saw her on the bed of death—wasted and wan, and dying through very weakness and extinction,—her friends lost—her fame destroyed—her heart broken,—in this manner I saw her expire;—it was thus we parted.

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FRAGMENT II.

* * * * * *

It was about this time that I began to be assured that Eleanor loved me. Those who have known what the consciousness of being beloved *is*, can imagine the sensations with which, in this instance, it dawned and brightened upon me. Oh! there is no joy under heaven like the feeling of being loved! The gratifications of vanity—the triumphs of ambition—sink into nothing in comparison with this; or, rather, they are all included in it. When we know that we are beloved by her whose affection we prize beyond all earthly—almost beyond *all*, desires;—when the sweet avowal still sounds in our ears, and the delicious *consciousness* is burning within our hearts;—then, indeed, have we reached the summit—the very apex—of all human enjoyment. Our gait is more buoyant—our port more lofty—and we look, as it were, with a kind of

pitying contempt upon all we meet. I mean literally what I say.—Any one who has thus loved and been loved, must, in those moments of desperate joy, have often said to himself—" that man is not loved as I am—that man does not possess *her* affections !"—With me these feelings rose to their utmost height. She whom I esteemed the most gifted and lovely being whom it had ever been my lot to meet—she who for months had been the very life-pulse of my heart, the vivifying breath of my nostrils—she who had wound round every fibre of affection, who had so long engrossed me utterly, heart and mind, body and soul—*she* loved me !—Thrown intimately as I had been into her society—inmated in the same dwelling—witnessing the development of her qualities and powers, as reserve softened into friendship, and friendship kindled into love;—living in constant intercourse for months with a creature like this,—how was it possible that my affection for her should not be of that nature and degree which concentrate every action, wish, feeling, and idea, upon one enthralling, only object?

She was indeed a woman, the possession of whose affection might be cause for pride. In mind, as well as in person, she differed from every other I ever knew. Her intellect was of an order which not only few women, but few human beings possess;—and yet she was, in some things, subject to all the weaknesses of her sex. Conscious of her excessive beauty she could not fail to be; but her consciousness of it rose into what might be directly termed vanity. Yet, vanity was not in her as in others; far from being ridiculous, offensive, and degrading, it was so playfully acknowledged, so gracefully confessed, that it became a question whether it did not rather add to, than alloy, the fascinations out of which it sprang. She was vain, also, of her powers of mind. She prided herself on the intellectual superiority which was so manifest over nine-tenths of her associates. The shallow ness, the emptiness, the affectations,—the paltry jealousies and petty competitions,—of most of her own age and sex, naturally created in her contempt and aversion. These, joined to her personal gifts, made her, as may be supposed, many enemies.

But who that deserved to have friends, was ever without enemies? We always find persons, who are universally popular and well spoken of, to be without qualities which excite envy—consequently, which merit admiration. They are not strikingly bad, but neither are they eminently good; they grovel in mediocrity. But, on the other hand, those of shining gifts and qualities will be disliked by many for their very merits. Those whom they have rivalled and outshone, or whom they may have slightingly treated,—join in ill offices and detraction. But they will be loved strongly by their friends, for they deserve their affection. I never should have a high opinion of any man, if no one were warm in abuse of him.

It was thus with Eleanor; if she had strong enemies, no one was ever beloved by her friends like her. There was a fascination about her which none, on whom it was exercised, could resist. I have known her win, in a time incredibly short, even those who had been the most unfriendly towards her, to feel and to confess that she, indeed, was the most enchanting of created beings!

Her powers of mind were, as I have said, of a truly uncommon order. She had had little tuition, yet her acquirements were of a nature and extent rare in any one—still more rare in a woman. I have often wondered, indeed, that, with so few advantages, her acquisitions should have been so great: but it is one of the peculiar marks and gifts of genius to thrive most strongly under circumstances calculated, one would think, most to tend to its repression. Of this, Eleanor was a striking instance; her very disadvantages had been rendered beneficial. Being chiefly self-taught, she had not wasted her time, and expended her intellect, upon the *fadaises* which commonly make up so engrossing a share of a woman's education. She had acquired the modern languages usually learned by her sex; but not, as is generally the case, merely for the sake of the acquisition. She had regarded them as means, not ends. She had used them to admit her to the stores of thought which are garnered in them—to enable her to commune with mighty minds in all the freshness of their original speech. She had directed her

attention, also, to studies little usual with women;—studies of a grasp and extent for which, in general, men arrogantly declare themselves alone to be fitted, and from which women submissively and indolently shrink. But Eleanor exerted fearlessly the gifts which Heaven had showered in such lavish bounty upon her. Brimmed up and running over, her genius had sought new channels in which to run forth;—too full for its banks, it had broken for itself a new course.

With a mind thus stored with knowledge, and, what is better still, thus used to activity and exertion, she was in intellect little like one of her age and sex. And yet, at the same time, she eminently possessed that indescribable womanly grace, which softens, without impairing, mental vigour,—which gives delicacy, without weakness, to masculine knowledge. Neither was she at all wanting in what are understood by 'female accomplishments:'—she could beat on their own ground those whose whole pretensions rested on these things—whose whole time had been devoted to their acquisition. In the most delightful of all these 'accomplish-

ments,'—in music—her powers, both from nature and cultivation, were indeed great. But it was chiefly, perhaps, their *application* which rendered their effect so exquisite. Instead of the cold, unreal, artist-like, exhibition, which music is made by so many, her singing always appeared as spontaneous, heart-springing, and natural, as speech. She would mingle, also, in the gay and graceful follies of society, with a fascination and a charm which made her (if I may so speak,) Queen of its brilliant butterflies; and which would lead one to suppose that her heart craved for nothing more—that her mind could soar no higher. And yet she was endowed, as I have stated, with a brilliancy of wit, a grasp of mind, and a solidity of judgment, which even few men possess at all, and still fewer, till they have reached double the age which she was then. She had, indeed, to borrow the happy expression of a celebrated writer*, " la tête d'un homme, le corps d'une femme, et le cœur d'un ange." Truly may I add with him—" il ny' a rien d'exaggéré dans cet éloge."

* M. Jouy.

It may be thought that I am painting with a lover's pencil—that I am heaping together qualities and gifts which were never joined in one person. But, No. The fervour of the imagination, and the hot gush of the blood, are equally cooled at my age; and the years that have passed since the time of which I now write, have necessarily sobered and realized my judgment, even on this engrossing point. Were it not, indeed, that a long lapse of time *has* intervened, I could not write on the subject at all. But those days and deeds seem to me a former state of existence. They are mirrored at the bottom of my heart with the utmost vividness, both of brightness and of gloom—with all the intensity both of their desperate enjoyment, and of their unspeakable anguish. But still, I have since been so changed a man—my life had, as I may say, so completely a new commencement from that period,—that I look back to it more as a departed spirit may be supposed to look back upon its existence of this world, than as upon circumstances which actually took place under my eyes, and really happened to myself.

Still, I am aware that I am likely to be accused of exaggeration for the way in which I have spoken of Eleanor;—for, once or twice, in society, when the conversation has chanced to turn upon women, I have not been able to resist rapidly sketching the picture which I have here given more at length;—and it has always been pronounced a fancy-piece, not a portrait—or, at most, to be, like the Venus of Phidias, composed of the remembered beauties of many. "Where," it has been said, "where does one meet a woman like this?"—I grant that it is not common—I grant that it is most rare—but still such women *do* exist. Once in a life-time, perhaps, like the blooming of the aloe, we do meet with such a being—as if it were to convince us that the golden age of the human race was not *all* a fable;—as if it were to prove to us that women might exist, worthy of drawing down the children of heaven to commune with them.

Such was the woman I loved—such was the woman who loved me,—and I then thought the possession of that love, happiness. It *was* hap-

piness for the moment; or rather enjoyment, extreme enjoyment,—for real *happiness* it scarcely could be called at any time. It was imbittered by the consciousness of wrong;—by the weight at the heart of the eternal bar betwixt us;—by the deadly chill of the thought that she never could be mine—or that, in being so, she must lose herself for ever!

If there be, among those who read these pages, one who is at this moment balancing on the verge of virtue, ere he topple over its edge for ever;—if, in plain words, there be among them one who is on the point of effecting the undoing of the woman he loves—I entreat, I conjure him here for one moment to pause. And, as he shall answer to his conscience at the day of death, to his God at the day of judgment, let him advance no step farther in his course.—Let him reflect for one moment what he requires her to sacrifice for him, and he will shudder at his own selfishness. To give up friends, fame, fortune, peace of mind;—to change innocence into guilt—chastity into uncleanness;—to sink from an object of veneration

and love into a scoff and a by-word—" a thing that mothers warn their daughters from;"—to place herself out of the pale of all social intercourse, of all friendly communion;—and oh! far, far, above all, to throw guilt upon her immortal soul;—these are the things which he asks at her hands—these are the sacrifices which he remorselessly exacts!—And for what purpose does he act thus?—For happiness?—Alas! Let him be assured, if not by his own reason, at least by the warning of one who speaks from the cruellest experience—let him be fully assured that he is drawing upon himself the deepest and most dreadful *un*happiness—the most utter and damning misery. Let him ask himself whether he is prepared for this—whether he is ready to plunge himself and the woman of his love into deadly and remediless guilt—to heap coals of burning fire upon his heart and hers?—Let him ask himself whether he is ready to do these things, for these assuredly *are* the things which he was about to do. If he be not, again I say let him pause—and oh! let that pause be final.

But I argue thus when the lapse of years has placed these things before me, as before one who looks over the game, not who has staked his whole soul upon its event. I know how very easy it is, when we are not tempted, to preach resistance to temptation—I know, alas! still better, how difficult that resistance is. And yet, many of these thoughts and feelings were present to me even at that time. I knew that the course which I was pursuing, must lead to misery as well as to crime, yet I never paused in my pursuit. This may appear contradictory; but all who have ever been similarly circumstanced know but too well how lamentably real it is.

It will probably have been observed that I have hitherto shunned speaking of Eleanor's husband. I have done this for two reasons;—first, because I wronged him, and I do not like to speak ill of one whom I injured—*well* I could not speak of him;—and secondly, because my personal knowledge of him was but slight; for very shortly after my first becoming acquainted with Eleanor, he was sent to a distant part of the country, and I never

saw him after. In India, where hospitality is unbounded, it was proper as well as natural that she should pass her husband's absence in the house of her friend. Of that house, alas! I also was an inmate.

But I must say a few words of Mr. ———. He was not very much—not above ten years, at least,—older than Eleanor; so that in age there was no great disparity between them. But in every thing else, the poles of the earth are not so opposite as they were. He was one of those men who take a sullen and obstinate pride in stupidity and ignorance: —a morose savage, who loves to make a brutal sneer at delicacy, talent, and cultivation:—a fellow who, drunken and dissolute himself, would fill the house with his debauched companions, and then rail at his wife for despising their society;—who feeling himself scorned, resented it with the most virulent and implacable hatred. Hate, in a man like this, would naturally, and in fact did, shew itself in every species of brutality;—I believe there is none, short of manual violence, which he did not evince towards Eleanor. This is an unsightly por-

trait, but it is only too faithfully drawn. Having once begun upon the subject, I cannot restrain myself from speaking on it openly and warmly. Warmly, for I almost feel *myself* injured;—for if Eleanor could but have esteemed and respected her husband, worlds would not have shaken her faith to him, even though that respect and esteem should have been unattended with affection. And oh! what unhappiness and guilt had then been spared to me!—But as it was, contempt and hatred were equally mingled in her feelings towards him. Such as I have described her, every quality was the opposite of those of her husband. What, indeed, have genius, loveliness, and feeling, in common with ill-favour of person and utter brutality of mind?—It was as if Ariel had been wedded to the earth-born Caliban.

Why, then, did she marry him?—Alas! at the time she did marry him, she was so very a child "she knew not what she did." Her youth was so extreme that she was tempted to the sacrifice—(for even then she considered it one)—by those allurements which are such only in childhood. To use

the words of a poet than whom no one has painted sorrow and guilt more powerfully, or tracked them up to their original causes more accurately *,—

> "She now was promised choice of daintiest food
> And costly dress, that made her sovereign good."

Gracious heaven!—what has that parent to answer who could act thus towards his child? And yet how many there are, who, for ambition, or for meaner interest, offer up such victims every day? How many do we see causing and enforcing the misery of their child's whole life with the nominal wish to make them happy?—Happiness!—Is it happiness for an infant, wedded during the dream of childhood, to awake in maturity and find herself the slave of an idiot or a brute?—Is it happiness for a lovely and gifted woman to be forced to link herself to doting age, or wealthy or titled folly?—Is it happiness for the heartstrings to be uprooted from the object round which they had grown firm, and then for the streaming wound to be seared by an irrevocable union with another, indifferent, if not detested?—Are these things hap-

* Crabbe.

piness?—Who will say they are?—And yet who can deny that they are daily done under its name, and professedly for its accomplishment? Let such parents reflect upon the fate to which they have given up their child,—upon the worse than Egyptian bondage into which they have sold her—the thraldom of the soul. Let them think upon the long, long years of gradual martyrdom—the wasting of the health, the languid sickening of the mind, the chronic heart-break, (if I may be allowed the phrase), which make up the measure of her destiny;—that killing *à coups d'épingles*, which is the most insupportable, because the most lasting, of torments. Let them think, too, (and shudder as they think,) of the reckoning to which they will be called. The marring of their child's happiness in this world is already at their door;—and if she sink under the temptations to which they have made it certain she will be exposed, and for yielding to which they have given her every cause and every palliation,—then will her next-world's penalties be on their heads likewise!

It was from the circumstance of this early mar-

riage that Eleanor had, as I have mentioned, lacked tuition. She was married so young that she was at that time scarcely half-taught in any thing;—and *after* her marriage, such a husband was not likely to put himself to much expense or trouble to improve and expand her mind. On the contrary, he strove to repress it as much as possible to the level of his own, and discountenanced rather than gave aid to her progress. But such a mind as hers could not be repressed;—the attempt was like throwing water upon a powerful fire, which heightens that which it is unable to extinguish.

Eleanor had a child—an infant at this time a few months old. How I loved that child!—In despite of the feelings of hate which burned within me towards its father, I doated on it with a love passing almost paternal affection itself. I saw in it its mother only. I had always been fond of children when they came to be able to prattle their first ideas—to give to view the first buddings of human reason;—but from infants I had ever felt a peculiar aversion. There was something in the

appearance of their skin, in the touch of their flesh, which to me was even repugnant. But *her* child I would fondle in my arms for hours. That smile, which, on the faces of other infants, has seemed to me so unmeaning and vapid, was bright and delicious when it lighted up the eyes, and played around the lips, of this dear one. I used to fancy that it knew and loved me—and was half jealous and angry when the nurse came to take it from me, and the child, as was natural, stretched its arms with affection towards her.

One of the first open betokenings of my love for Eleanor, was some verses I wrote to that child;—one of the first distinct avowals of hers for me, was the manner in which she received them. They are as follows:—I have no copy of them—I wrote them hastily one evening with a pencil, and gave them to her in the rough and only copy;—but they are as fresh in my memory as when they first rose into my mind, in all the glow and gushing of youthful poetry and early passion:—

I.

Sweet infant, smile again,—although
I may not claim that look of thine ;—
My soul, alas! can never know
The touching joy to call thee mine.
Yet, when I've seen that sinless smile,
I've felt my heart grow light the while ;
The evil passions of my breast
Have then been almost charmed to rest.

II.

Oh! may the beams of that full blue eye,
Which now repose so placidly,
Never flash forth the unhallowed fire
Of wrath—of hatred—envy—ire :
And may that calm, unsullied brow,
So clear, so pure, so stainless now,
Be always thus—nor ever bear
One trace of sorrow furrowed there!

III.

Oh! how I covet that soft thrill
Of hallowed pleasure, which will fill
Thy mother's soul, when she shall trace
Nascent expression in thy face—
When first thy kindling eye shall shew
Thy little heart hath learned to know
Thy mother ; and thy smile revealing
The earliest touch of tender feeling,
Shall add the power of dawning sense
To the charm of infant innocence!

And, more than all, when thy tongue shall try
To lisp its first words falteringly;
And syllable the sound most dear,
Most hallowed to a mother's ear—
Sweeter to her than the dying notes
Of music which over the water floats,
Or the heavenly strain when the winds give tone
To the harp that speaks but by them alone.
Is there on earth an equal bliss?—
No! there's none so perfect—so pure as this!

IV.

Yes! dearest infant, smile again,
And stretch thy little arms towards me;—
And fondly look on me, for then
I almost dream that thou must be
His, who thus loves thee doatingly!—
Whose very heart of hearts caresses thee—
Whose soul's most fervent feeling blesses thee—
Who'd give that soul itself, if aught
Could make thee really his—but, no—
I must control that maddening thought—
Alas! it never *can* be so!

I may well remember these verses,—for, as I have said, they caused the first explicit confession of mutual affection between Eleanor and me. It needs, indeed, but little to bring passion to the lips, when it has reached its full ripeness in the heart.

When the train is so perfectly laid, it requires but one spark of fire to make it blaze forth. When two persons have loved each other for some time—when all their actions, their whole manner, air, and bearing, betray that love, though the tongue may not have ratified the avowal,—the circumstance is very, very slight, which will bring it openly into light and life. And yet we almost fear to approach in direct terms, that subject which, indirectly, has long been the only one thought and spoken of. The dawning belief, and, at last, complete conviction of being beloved, make the tongue fearful to utter anything which might mar or disturb a state of such enthralling blissfulness. It is usually some chance—some word dropped—or, more frequently, some casual event or circumstance, which opens the sluices of the heart, and lets forth its flood of fondness. The looking together on something beautiful, appalling, or sublime;—Nature in her sweetness or her terrors,—the moonlight sea,—a storm,—some position of mutual danger,—a passage of resistless poetry,—or the sound of soul-swelling music—all

these things are used to draw forth to the lips the affection, not hidden, indeed, but still unconfessed. But it was none of these with us. It was the expression of my uncontrollable and overflowing fondness for her child, that gave breath to our fondness for each other. The feelings of a mother were mingled with those of love, and added to them their own redeeming purity and gentleness.

There was, in truth, vast difference between Eleanor's affection for me and mine for her. I loved as men love;—not, indeed, without deep sense of the value of a soul and mind like hers,—but with all the violence also of guilty and impure desire. She loved, not as most women do, but as *some* women *can* love;—with a fervour as great, and a devotedness far greater than is ever felt by man, and a purity and absence of sinful passion to which he is an utter stranger. I am not going to "babble of" platonics—I have lived too long in the world, and seen too much of it, to talk about those trumperies at this time of day:—but I do say that there are some women—few, I grant, but still some—whose affection, while it possesses all the

warmth usually confined to sexual love, remains unstainedly free from its grosser impulse.

At the time of which I speak, however, I had little knowledge of the extent to which this can exist in woman; and I, therefore, wondered, as well as grieved, at the slow progress of my suit with Eleanor. The perfect and almost startling candour of her manner;—and the unreserved abandonment of her attachment towards me, had led me to believe that her yielding would follow speedily and of course. But, though she had passed what would have been the Rubicon of all others, she advanced no jot farther. To my unceasing urging, her reply was unvarying and firm. She did not affect to refrain from any feeling with regard to her husband,—she spoke freely of the scorn and hate in which she held him;—she avowed as frankly and fully her love for me,—but her determination was not the less strong to cast no guilt and shame upon herself. She was proud—very proud;—and she shrank from the idea of doing aught which she could not avow and justify in the face of the world. The manner in which she used to speak to me on

this subject had the more force from its calm decision and quiet firmness of tone. It appeared, indeed, like that of one unchangeably fixed.

We were thus for some time on a footing which is most rare to those in our situation. We lived in all the familiarity of unreserved affection, and yet were wholly free from any deeper guilt. I say this is most rare,—for, even when it does occur, it cannot possibly be of long duration. It is against our Nature—and whenever we wrestle with *that*, we are certain to be worsted in the conflict. It were wiser, indeed,

> " ——————————— to make
> Our bower upon some icy lake,
> When thawing suns begin to shine
> Than trust———"

to the still more treacherous and unstable support of our Resolution, in circumstances such as these.

But, from the causes I have mentioned, the continuance of this species of intercourse was, in my own instance, much longer than is usually the case. We were, at this time, living in a wild district near the sea; from which rose steep and high cliffs that

swelled into mountains as they receded inward into the country. Among these it was our constant habit to walk together, to enjoy that delicious evening freshness, with which a tropical climate repays the fierce heats of the day. One evening, we had wandered farther and longer than usual, till at last Eleanor was fatigued; and we sat down that she might rest.

The spot where we were seated is as present to me at this moment, as if it were before my actual vision. It was by the side of a steep rocky path, which wound, in zig-zag lines, up the face of the mountain. Before us, was a deep and narrow valley—so narrow, indeed, that it might almost be called a ravine—which separated the fellow mountain from that which we were on. In front of this valley, a little to the right, was the sea—the magnificent eternal sea;—now spreading its boundless expanse of deep inky blue into the horizon, with an unruffled surface, but a heavy, bulky, swell of the body of its waters. I do not know that there is any state in which the ocean is so solemn and imposing as in this. In a perfect calm, it is dreary

and monotonous;—in a light breeze, it is dressed in smiles and brightness;—in a storm, it is awful, fearful, terrible. But in the state I have described, we gaze on it with a deep and oppressive sense of its majesty and vastness, which it inspires at no other time. In calm it loses the one, in tempest the other—for the rage of the elements always narrows the circle of our view.

The sun, too, was setting on it now. It was one of those evenings in which the sun goes down almost to the horizon, shrouded and hidden by dense clouds; and then shines forth for a few moments with that deep and lurid brightness which it sheds at such times. The wide sea was tinged with a dark shadowy tint of red, like that which is produced by looking through obscured glass at an eclipse. Its full heaving acquired a sullen threatening aspect from this blood-coloured hue, and looked, if I may so say, like the face of a guilty man brooding over fierce and revengeful thoughts. The valley was in perfect gloom, as well as the hill behind us, and three-fourths of that opposite—but the summit of this last caught the

only ray of gold which the clouds permitted the sun to shed, and shone in feeble and melancholy lustre, as contrasted with the darkness, or the gloomy light, which was spread over all else.

We had walked slowly up the difficult path, and sat down here upon a fragment of the rock to gaze on this beautiful and impressive scene. The seat placed us close to each other ;—our limbs touched, and I was forced to pass my arm round Eleanor to support her on the rock. Is there any one who was ever thus placed, in such a scene, at such a season, and does not treasure in his heart's memory the sensations of that hour? Even when alone, mountains—the vast sea—a frowning sun-set—occasion a full deep awfulness which weighs on the heart, and even on the physical breath. There is a tightening of the breast, and a leaden oppression of the nerves, which, nevertheless, cause a deep moral sensation rather than bodily pain. The most thoughtless pause in their thoughtlessness—the most wicked are softened to repentance—the most callous, for that moment, feel. Upon a heart warm and ardent—untouched, at least untainted, by crime

—it is needless to say what the effect must be and is. But when we are with one we love—whom we dote on with all the softness of the tenderest feeling—whom we adore with all the fervour of burning passion;—when we feel the vital warmth of her frame thrill through us;—when her breath is mingled with ours—and we gaze into her very soul which beams in her eyes with inexpressible affection and abandonment—then, indeed, does the heart swell with sensations which have no words to paint them—but which need them the less,—as those who have once felt them require no description, and to none but those who *have* felt them could any description convey the feeblest shadow of what they are.

We were thus placed:—my arm supported Elea-

nor on the narrow seat—her eyes mingled with mine. We did not speak. There are some moments, and this was one of them, when speech is wholly powerless. Nay, more—when to speak would break, as it were, the enthralling spell which is over us—would destroy at once those air-built visions which, as in the Eastern story, lap our silent spirits in Elysium.

Yes! thus we felt,—as if the earth, and sky, and sea, had vanished from before our eyes, and there were only ourselves in the world; as if we were but one being—as if we had but one soul!

But, alas! there is no scene, however sublime—there is no hour, however solemn,—which can long suspend the headstrong wilfulness of Passion. I took advantage of the softening and swelling of the heart, which we then both felt, to return to my ceaseless topic—to urge my usual suit. But the heart of Eleanor was not like mine: that which passed away lightly in me was by her far more strongly felt. The holy sensations of that hour outweighed its dangers, and spiritualized and made pure even unlawful affections.

As I proceeded, though she continued to listen attentively, she seemed to cease to hear;—her eye became fixed and unmeaning, and her whole form grew motionless and stiffened. A sort of waking stupor appeared to come over her;—I strove to rouse her, but in vain. "I shall be better presently," was her only answer, and she repeated it to all I said. The continued, unvarying, and

mechanical manner in which she repeated this sentence, was more fearful even than if she had been wholly speechless. I became alarmed to a maddening degree. There she sat like stone; her eyes fixed—her colour gone—her frame rigid. "I shall be better presently," she repeated to every thing I said to her, and even when I did not speak. I was utterly, helplessly, at a loss. A fit, a swoon, hysterics, I should have known how to succour and relieve; but this unearthly statue-like suspension of animation, with the single exception of that one echoing phrase, made me nerveless and helpless as a child. There was no water on this stony mountain, and I feared to leave her to fetch it. She remained motionless.

At this moment, there came singing down the path a little boy of, it might be, ten years old, in ragged clothes, and with bare feet, but skipping along at a merry pace, and carolling forth his ditty with the gaiety and lightness of an innocent and happy heart. The path brought him close to us; but, after looking at us for a moment with some surprise, he proceeded on his way. As he passed,

I saw, to my infinite relief and joy, expression again begin to spread over Eleanor's face. The tears rose into her eyes, and at last began to flow freely.—"I don't know why it is," said she, "I was not thinking of that child,—and yet the sight of his poor little naked feet, tripping over the hard sharp stones, brought tears to my eyes, as it were by instinct." And she wept on, and I rejoiced, for the tears relieved her.

I have often wondered at this since. I have thought it strange that this merely physical sight should produce tears in one who was in such a death-like state, and who had so much cause and will to weep, but could not. Neither could she ever account for it, more than in the few words which she had employed when it happened—"I saw his bare feet on the rough path, and I cried."

Eleanor continued to weep, and I did not endeavour to check her tears. I feared to renew the unnatural and appalling state from which they had relieved her; and I determined to say no more on the subject which had caused it. To my surprise, however, she began upon it herself. After the silence

had lasted some time, she strove to dry up her tears, and, turning to me, said in a voice, firm indeed, but of a low, distinct, sustained intonation, which carried with it something unearthly—" If it will give you happiness, it—it—it shall be as you wish, —but—I could not live after it;"—and so saying she sank upon my bosom, and began to weep unrestrainedly.

Oh, God! what at that moment were to me all the gratifications of passion!—How weak, how pitiful seemed to me then the motives which had actuated me all along!—how cruel and remorseless did it appear, to desire to sacrifice her happiness to my own—no not even that,—for *happiness* I knew it could not cause even to myself. Here was this lovely and gifted creature—whom I loved with a love passing all human affection,—throwing herself upon my feelings of mercy—yielding, but entreating to be spared. I do repeat that at that moment all evil passions died within me. " No," I said in my heart, " I will not sacrifice this dear one at the shrine of selfish and impure indulgence. I will cherish her in my inmost heart, but it shall be with the

purity of a brother's love,—though still with all the deep and overflowing tenderness of my own. I *will* spare her—and, oh how blessed will the feeling be hereafter that I have done this good deed, when the temptation to a bad one was so fearfully strong—that I have preferred her happiness to my own enjoyment—her innocence to my triumph !"

I paused some moments while these thoughts were passing through my mind, and then said to Eleanor, " No, it shall *not* be, I never will urge it again ;"—and, as I spoke, I stooped my face to her's, and our lips met for the first time. They then met in guiltlessness and purity ;—yes, *purity* ; for the kiss which a mother imprints upon her newborn infant's brow is not more free from unholy passion, than was that in which my lips were pressed to Eleanor's, then.

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FRAGMENT III.

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ALAS! how weak are our best and most earnestly formed resolutions, against the power of Passion. They are like characters traced on the sand of the sea-shore, which the ever-returning wave washes out in its advance. At the time that I thus promised to myself and to Eleanor, I meant that that promise should be kept most religiously,—and for some time I did keep it. But I did not take the one only step which, in such cases, can be of the least avail; and this might of itself have shewn to me how it would all end. In such matters, there is, indeed, but one mode of safety and escape—to fly. All else is the merest self-deception. These knots are truly Gordian—they can never be untied, they must be severed at one stroke. When affection has reached the pitch which mine then had, it is utterly vain to hope for its extinction, while the continuance

of intercourse supplies it with daily fuel. While that oil continues to feed the lamp, the flame will never die;—it should be withheld totally and at once.

And here let me once more entreat those who are yet only in the distant draught of that cataract which dragged me down, to save themselves from its vortex while their strength is still sufficient. Let those who are proceeding still hesitatingly on this path of guilt and sorrow, stop short. They may be assured that it is like that in the fable which led to the lion's cave—those who have once reached its extremity never can return. Oh! if they did but know one half of the wretchedness that they are heaping upon themselves, as well as upon the woman they love;—if they could but prophetically feel that which in a time fearfully short they *will* feel;—if they could for one moment be placed at that point of time at which the heart exclaims—" And is *this* what I have so long and so ardently looked to—what I have waded through so much wickedness to reach?"—then, indeed would they suddenly stop with that sick shuddering which we feel at the

moment of preservation from great and narrowly escaped danger. But when will example, however dreadful, be of the same avail as personal experience?

I continued some time faithful to the promise I had so earnestly made; but again I say that it is utter self-deception to hope to remain in such circumstances, and to remain blameless.

"Whoever stands to parley with temptation
Parleys to be o'ercome ——————."

By degrees, almost imperceptible even to myself, I began to relapse into my former feelings.

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FRAGMENT IV.

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We were now married.—My heart's wildest wish —my imagination's most extravagant hope—were now realized. Our communion was now constant and permitted;—our love was unreproved by man, and sanctioned by heaven. She was mine—mine before the face of the world, as well as on the altar of our own hearts—mine by the ties of lawful observance, as well as by those of irrepressible affection. And were we happy?—Alas! none who have been thus wedded will ask a question the answer to which is so sadly certain.—Happiness *never* can be reached through guilt. What *would be* happiness under other circumstances ceases to be so in these. The means have destroyed the end. If, six months before, I had been asked what would make me perfectly and transcendently happy, I should have said without a pause—to be married to

Eleanor. And now we were married—now she was my wife—and happiness was farther from me than ever. It was then before me—though beyond my reach;—I was now past it, and it was irrecoverable.

And *she*, what did she feel? She felt as all those who are placed as she was, do and must feel—she felt far more also. It is generally divorce which has severed the chain of the first marriage, and there is *some* consolation at least in the thought that, if it had not been for that, the second union could never have been formed. But here, where death had given her freedom—when so short a further continuance in the path of virtue would have rendered it the path of happiness also—here, indeed the pangs of regret and self-reproach became doubly gnawing and severe. Her husband had died before the story of our guilt and his wrong had reached him—but the guilt remained undiminished—the wrong continued the same. She had sacrificed *all* for her love for me—and one short month would have made the sacrifice needless. She, the proudest of women, had lost fame, name, and station—she, whose qua-

lities had raised her enemies who had been *her* scorn, was become the object of their insolent reproach or still more insolent pity;—she, who had been the fondest of mothers, had abandoned her child;—she, who had been the purest of human beings, was polluted and fallen. And all this had been escaped, had her resolution stood firm but one month more;—had she for that brief period continued to act up to her nobler self, she had gained blamelessly, and in honour, that which the sacrifice of all she valued on earth had failed to give her.

When the news of her husband's death first reached her, these reflections had upon her the most violent effect. But when time had rolled on,—when, after the intervention of a considerable period, we were married, I had hoped that the agony of her mind would soften down into resignation at least, if she could not attain contentment. I knew that such feelings as her's then were could not last. In some persons, and on some occasions, severity of suffering is condensed to a degree that necessarily shortens its duration. The human mind—the human frame —could not bear its long continuance. Those con-

solations and condolences, also, which deep affection alone can render, and deep affection can alone receive—that fulness and perfectness of sympathy which a suffering heart finds in one which is truly its fellow—every variation and shadow of feeling being thoroughly *understood*, every gradation of suffering being intensely felt for;—all these—and those who have been in affliction well know their value—all these were her's. But it was a long, a very long, time before she became at all herself. And when she did recover tranquillity, it was not the healthful quiet of peacefulness—it was the deep solemn *settledness* (if I may so speak) of fixed misery.

And now commenced a period to which, even at this distance of time, I shudder to look back. It was a term of little more than two years, but during which I underwent an eternity of anguish. There are many—especially in this country, where consumptive diseases are so awfully common—who have witnessed and watched over one dear to them declining to the grave. There are many who have seen the bloom of youth turn to the false and fatal hectic of disease—who have beheld the beauties of

person betokening, and the gifts of mind hastening, the progress of decay. I say "the gifts of mind hastening"—for alas! it is well known that, in such cases, the more powerful and sensitive the mind, the more it preys upon the feeble frame—the more keen "the blade," the sooner it "wears out the sheath." There are many, I say, who have devoted themselves to this office of superlative pain and sorrow—who have lived thus, as it were, in the sight and the fellowship of death. But oh! let me hope that there are but few who can be placed in more intimate comparison with myself. They may have fruitlessly tended, and agonizedly lost, the sister whom they have loved—the daughter whom they have adored—the wife whom they have worshipped; —but their affliction, severe as it was—their grief, bitter as it might be—was not increased by self-accusation—was not added to tenfold by remorse. If I beheld the consuming advances of disease, I knew that *I* had caused them,—if I shuddered at her approaching death, I knew that it was inflicted by *me!*

At the first, the tokens of her malady were so

slight and gradual, that it was no marvel if I was blind to them. Her cheek grew paler, but it never had been ruddy—her form grew thinner, but it always had been slight. By degrees, however, the usual signs became apparent, even to me. Even I—I who was interested to my very soul in the event, and consequently was the last to see, the very last to believe, the fate that was impending—even I could shut my eyes to it no longer. But when I first suspected the truth at all, the whole of it flashed across me—" to be once in doubt was once to be resolved." The moment I saw there was *any* danger, I magnified it—or at least made it more instant than it truly was. *She* had never been blinded to her situation—she had felt the germ of death within her—she knew that the sentence had gone forth, and could not be recalled.

I did not at that time think it possible that any thing could have increased my love for Eleanor—still less did I think that any thing could have raised my opinion of her heart and mind. And yet I never knew her till now;—I never knew to what extent strength of mind could reach—I never knew what the

heart *could* be—I never knew how two human beings *could* love each other. For a full year before her death, she saw that its approach was progressive and certain;—her conduct during that time was, not what might have been looked for from a weak and erring woman—but what would have done honour to the sternest philosopher of the Pagan time, or to the sincerest, warmest, and devoutest Christian. It was her religion, indeed—pure, and ardent as it was—that supported me in that dreadful period. For it is one of the attributes of Christianity, that deep faith in its power, and strong cultivation of its duties, do not alone benefit those by whom that faith is held, that cultivation exercised, but are reflected also upon all within their sphere of influence. The religion of Eleanor was indeed Christian. It may be said that it had not preserved her from guilt, that it had not rescued her from evil. True;—passion did burst beyond its control, did act in defiance of its dictates;—but if religion did not save her from sin, it at least enabled her to expiate and repent it. Thus, it was not I who supported her in that awful time; it was *she* who sustained *me*—it was

she who soothed me from utter despair—who spoke in consolation to my sinking spirit. She, who was to die, was the consoler of him who was to live;—she, who endured the suffering, compassionated and gave pity to him who had caused it. I will not say, that there was no reproach in word, deed, look, or gesture—it were a cold unworthy phrase if I were so to speak:—No,—affection the fondest, the fullest, the most ardent, the most unremitting, was all that breathed from her lips—beamed in her eyes—spoke in her actions. That love which sacrifices all things without a doubt,—which suffers all things without a murmur,—which adds to joy and diminishes sorrow,—which is overflowingly grateful for kindness, and is unreproachful even in ill requital;—that love which time adds to by habit and accumulation, instead of lessening by coldness and satiety;—that love, in a word, which woman alone can feel on earth, which man can never reach, and of which he is undeserving—that love she felt towards me to the last in all its extremity and perfection.

While yet her strength permitted, she would stroll forth with me to gaze on that beautiful nature

which she was so soon to leave—which she had always loved so much, and felt so strongly. Sunset—the hour of the heart—used with her to be the season when she would look on the flushed and splendid heavens, with those aspirations of the soul which become deeper and more solemn as the time approaches when that soul will be freed from its earthly nature, and will know those awful secrets which are hidden from all humanity. She would then gaze upon the skies, as if she would pierce the azure firmament, and behold those dwellings which we love to figure to ourselves as existing in the regions of upper space.

We have prayed together at that hour;—and what praying can equal that which is breathed in communion with one we love? There is a full deep swelling of the heart—an high and sublime soaring of the soul—that almost raise us above the level of our nature,—which, at such times, seems to shake itself free from its human infirmities, and to ascend into a purer and more spiritual being. In other prayer, the feelings are less fervent—the thoughts less gushing—than when they are thus joined with

those of one more dear to us than ourselves. But *then*, the sternness and solemnity of devotion are softened and made ardent by the mingling of human love, while they cleanse it from all earthly and unholy feeling.

The last time we were ever out together, was on an occasion of this kind;—when the sky and the earth seemed alike lighted up by the glories of the setting sun. We paused opposite to it at that time when its radiance sheds a brightness and lively aspect over all within the horizon's compass. As the sun declines lower, there is an air allied to sadness thrown over the landscape; but it was before this, that we stopped to gaze upon its beauties and its splendour. It was a very little way from the house—for she was too feeble to walk far. Alas! what a contrast she now was to the radiant being which I have described. Her form was wasted to a fearful thinness—to a degree of attenuation, indeed, almost unnatural—yet it retained that gracefulness of outline and of movement for which it had always been so remarkable. But it was now the grace of langour, not of elasticity and buoyant

youth. The deep red spot burned in the centre of her cheek—the rest of which, as well as her brow, was of that clear transparent whiteness common to her disease. Her eye—that eye whose expression I have never seen equalled, and which remains so intensely in my memory—her eye alone appeared unchanged. Yet even this *was* changed. Its brightness still remained, but it had an unhealthful glassiness superadded;—and it was sunken within its hollow, which took from the power of its glance, and gave to it a more saddened expression. She leaned heavily on my arm—but before we had got far, she complained of fatigue, and I supported her to a seat. We watched together the sun decline, and finally sink below the line of the horizon;—we saw the glowing and brilliant colours which he left in his descent gradually deepen in the sky, till all became shadow; while, on the other side, the beauties which the heavens wear by night, grew, first vaguely, and then by degrees more strongly, visible. The stars began to glitter one by one, and the firmament became more distinctly and brightly blue.

As the chill of the night came on, I pressed Eleanor to go in—but she begged to stay to gaze for the last time on the loveliness of night—" I know," said she, " I never shall come out again—I am so feeble I scarcely could get these few steps—I must cease to attempt it altogether. Let me, then, stay, that I may gaze on all that Nature has of soft, and solemn, and enchanting—that the last time my eyes rest on it may be with *you*. The evening of my life has come—the night is fast approaching—let me look on this emblem of the fate which is so near me;—and, oh ! let me hope that after the agitations of the day, and the shadows of the nightfall, I may wake to the pure, solemn, beautiful serenity of a state like this !"——She bent her head upon my shoulder, and laid her cheek upon mine—it was hot even unto burning;—and the wasted and fleshless fingers, which I held within my own, were dry and parched. But her spirit was unfevered by the body's illness—and she prayed to heaven with me that night—for the last time in that glorious and holiest temple, Nature—with that calm resignation,

that solemn and subdued, but yet assured, hope, which are the best passports to the blessed immortality for which they implore.

Why do I dwell on these scenes?—Is it that I dread approaching that of death itself? On that, indeed, I *cannot* dwell.—Life ebbed away in gentle, imperceptible, but sure gradations. Her mind had ceased to suffer sometime before her death, on all points but one—*her child*. She had no cause for anxiety concerning it, as regarded itself,—but yet in the last days of her existence she longed to have with her that being to whom she had given birth—whom she had loved more tenderly, perhaps, if not so fervently,—if not so passionately, more purely, than any other upon earth. She would speak of her child more and more often as her death drew near,—the last word, indeed, which she distinctly pronounced was her child's name;—but after articulation had ceased, her last *look* was given to me—her last sigh was breathed upon my lips.

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FRAGMENT V.

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MEETING, after long absence, with those dear to us, is said to be one of the highest enjoyments of human existence. To me it proved one of the saddest moments of a sad life. Revisiting the scenes of our childhood is also accounted a great, though a melancholy, pleasure;—my return to them was even more bitter than my departure had been. During the long and dreary years which I had passed in India, the thoughts of *home* had been the food on which my soul had lived. The hope of one day being restored to it—of being again united to the dear ones who dwelt there—had supported me under the martyrdom of the heart, which is caused by long banishment. At length the time was come to which I had looked unvaryingly, for five and twenty years. I embarked for England; and, as our voyage lessened before us, my heart

expanded with the near accomplishment of long-deferred hope. During the last week of the passage, I felt sickening impatience for the sight of land. Our course had been rapid till within a few days' sail of England, when we met with baffling winds, which increased my eagerness to a painful pitch. I used to pace the deck during the first watch with the officer until he was relieved, and listen with engrossing interest to his stories of the usual circumstances of approaching England—of the chances of wind at the entrance of the channel—of the pilot coming on board—of running up to the Downs—of all the minutiæ, in short, with which the close of his different voyages had been varied. This man and his fellows looked happily forward to reaching home; but how different were their feelings from mine! They looked to the recurrence of a periodical pleasure: I felt the condensed intensity of long years of hope.

On the morning that we did make land, I was awakened by my servant with the tidings that we were close in shore. My cabin was on the seaward side of the ship, so, as I looked from the port-hole, I saw only

the green waves dancing and glittering in the breeze and sunshine of a summer morning: but the waves *were* green—and I blessed the colour, as assuring our nearness to land, and that land my own. I was speedily dressed and on deck. We were running rapidly up channel with a brisk westerly breeze—and the green hills of the Devonshire coast stretched away a-head and a-stern of us as far as the eye could reach. It so happened that it was this very part of the coast which I had seen last, when I was leaving England nearly six-and-twenty years before. My last look of my native country was at one of these very hills, in the cold dull light of a November evening. I now saw it again in all the glory of sunlight and of summer, and with the feeling of return, instead of departure, at my heart: and yet with these causes, both physical and inward, for joyous sensation, I question whether my feelings were not less sad on the former occasion than now. It was true I was then quitting my country—my friends—my home—all those charities which entwine themselves with the heart-strings in a manner never to be unravelled, and which caused mine to

strain almost to breaking as I left them. But to these pangs, many and bitter as they were, I had that all-powerful antidote—the buoyancy of a youthful spirit;—that false vision of early days, which, like a Claude Lorraine glass, throws a warm tint of richness and of pleasure over every scene, however melancholy and unhopeful its reality may be. Now my years of trial were past, and the moment was come to which I had always looked for repayment for all I underwent. But it found me changed, as all men must be, by the lapse of years—and suffering, as it is to be hoped all do not suffer, under the pain of bitter recollection. My heart was chilled with the retrospect of an unhappy life—and my joy for what was, was lost in my regret for what might have been. I felt, too, what all men must feel who pass the greater and better part of their life in present pain for the hope of future happiness. I felt that now, when it was at last within my grasp, I had but few and declining years to enjoy it.

But this was only the foretaste of the pain my return home was to cause me. I landed at Southampton,—and, without going to London, travelled

post across the country to my father's. It was in the month of July, and at the close of the day, as my chaise wound slowly up the hill, from the top of which I knew I should see my father's house. For the last few miles, the country had been becoming familiar to me, and I now recognized every spot which we passed. I saw the wood where I shot my first pheasant, and the cover where the hounds met on the day I was first out hunting; and I recollected the pride of my young heart at being allowed to mingle in the sports of grown men. But even here there was change—even the face of the country was not as I left it: how must, I thought, the human faces which I loved, have altered in the same period! In the place of a wild heath, of which the cover I have mentioned formed part, there were ploughed fields, trim hedge-rows, and a line of cottages which bore no mark of recent erection. The cover itself was railed in, and seemed kept as a preserve. All the free nature of the scene was lost; and, in my present mood, I thought it ill exchanged, even for the smiling fertility which occupied its place. When we reached the top of

the hill, the well-remembered scene of my childhood burst upon my sight. In all the long and painful years which had passed since I last looked on it, that spot had remained green and fresh at the bottom of a blighted heart—uneffaced by time—unchanged by sorrow. As it burst at once upon me now, my heart swelled with unutterable feelings—I threw myself back in the carriage, and wept aloud.—Who that has shed tears upon a like occasion will deny them to be those of unequalled bitterness.

The chaise proceeded rapidly down the hill, and passed through the village, which straggles to about half a mile from the park-gate. We passed many labourers returning from their work, and saw numberless loiterers, of all ages and both sexes, who ran out at the sound of the wheels to see the carriage go by. But in not one of these people did I recognise a known face: the young had been born during my absence—and the old were changed beyond all remembrance. I was changed myself; for no eye now lighted up with the joy of recognition, or beamed on me to welcome my return. The woman

who came out at the porter's lodge to open the gates, looked into my outstretched face as at that of a stranger; and as I passed into my father's gates, I felt that I was an alien among my kindred —a stranger in my home.

It was now that I first felt the full force of the change which had taken place in me, and in those to whom I was returning; and I began to have misgivings as to how I might appear to them, and they to me. It is true that I had kept up a constant intercourse with my family by letters—but what are letters at a distance of thirteen thousand miles, and during an absence of a quarter of a century? Can a letter set the writer before you, and shew the silent work of time upon his person? Can a letter, however affectionate, equal those little daily offices of kindness, which sink farther into the heart than even the greatest acts of friendship—as the continual dropping of water upon a stone makes the deepest impression? Can a letter convey the half-word, the passing look of tenderness?—or be unto us a watcher in sickness—a consoler in sorrow—a companion in enjoyment,—as he who wrote it would

have been? Alas! No;—when absence exceeds a certain time, and when, added to this, months of distance intervene, letters may indeed

"——waft a sigh from Indus to the Pole,"

but they will but feebly make known the daily life and feelings of correspondents to each other. They are as unsubstantial and imperfect in comparison with actual intercourse, as are the shadows of physical objects with the forms which cause them.

My fears on this head were but too truly accomplished. When I drove up to the house, my sister was waiting on the steps to receive me, and in a moment I was in her arms. When, after some time, we drew back to gaze upon each other; there was indeed cause for pain. We could not expect that we should be unchanged:—we knew that Time must have done his usual work;—but still we lived in each other's recollection just as we had parted, and the reality was scarcely the less sad from its having been, in a great degree, foreseen. The same smile, indeed—a smile never to be forgotten—still played in my sister's eye and lip; but the eye

was sunken, and the lip grown thin,—and the smile itself was sadder and more aged, like the frames and hearts of both of us. The full, blooming cheek was grown hollow and pale; and the luxuriant and beautiful hair, for which my sister had been remarkable, was entirely hidden—if, indeed, it still remained—by the widow's cap, which she had worn ever since her husband's death. This, and the gown of dark grey,—which was likewise, I found, her constant attire,—completed the contrast with the light-hearted, brilliant, blooming, beautiful girl whom I had left. For myself, I believe I was sufficiently changed also. My period of absence had been passed under a burning sun, and my figure and my face bore ample marks of its corroding influence. All the mental suffering, too, which I had undergone had given aid to the work of climate. I had left home a tall, florid, athletic boy of eighteen: I returned a withered, worn-out man of forty-five—thin even to leanness—and my whole frame nerveless and relaxed. My cheek was of that yellow, waxen colour, which long dwelling in a burning climate gives—and my white hairs were

fast outnumbering those which retained their original darkness. My sister and I read in each other's looks the shock we had mutually received, and we walked silently together into the house.

Here I was to experience a meeting still more bitter. I knew that my father had sunk almost into second childhood; but I had no expectation of finding his imbecility so complete. He was seated in an easy chair near the window, which reached to the ground, that he might enjoy the mild and grateful warmth of a July sun-set. His limbs were wrapped in flannels, and he was supported by pillows on either side. His head shook tremulously—his eye was vacantly fixed—and his jaw drooped in the extremity of dotage. This miserable wreck, which humanity could scarcely look at without a feeling of degradation, was all that remained of the hale and handsome man whom I had quitted—it was all that time and sorrow had spared of my father!—Our entrance attracted his attention, and he looked with surprise on *the stranger*!—"Set a chair for the gentleman," he muttered, almost mechanically; "perhaps he would like to take some-

thing after his journey." My heart swelled almost to bursting at this completion of my return home. This was what I had looked to so fondly and so long; and now, what was it but bitterness and sorrow? My sister saw my distress; and, going to my father, tried to make him comprehend who I was. "I am glad to see him," was the only answer which could be got from him. He made it mechanically —evidently totally unconscious of all which passed before him—his eye unmeaning—his words dreamingly spoken—and his whole aspect that of the last flickerings of the flame of life before it sank out for ever.

My father was shortly removed to his own room, and my sister and I were left to talk over old times together. The room in which we sat was the library, and had undergone scarcely any change since I had last seen it. My eye could recognise the books in the very places in which I had left them: —the heavily bound, red-edged folios were ranged along the ground-row, untouched, most probably, since my early thirst for books had led me to explore them;—and, in one corner of the highest shelf,

I saw a white-backed copy of Gulliver's Travels, which I had nearly broken my neck in clambering to reach. Most of the furniture was new ; but there was still an old blue and white china jar, which I had got into disgrace for cracking—and on which was still to be seen the rivet which the housekeeper had placed upon it at my entreaty. A large old-fashioned back-gammon table, also, stood in one corner, which I well recollected as having been one of the delights of my boyhood;—and the picture which hung over the chimney—the only one in the room —was, as it had always been, the portrait of an ancient worthy of our race, arrayed in the angular stiffness—the large ruff—clocked stockings, and be-rosed shoes,—of the court-dress of James the First's time. These circumstances may appear trifling ;—but I recollect they made strong impression upon me at the time,—and the task I have undertaken of writing the narrative of my life is naturally more a record of feelings than of events.

The long conversation I had with my sister, tended in no degree to remove the sadness which all these circumstances had caused. Her subdued

and melancholy manner shewed, that the hand of sorrow had been upon her also—that all her feelings were changed and saddened—except only her affection for me. I made inquiry for all those who were connected, in my recollection, with the dear home to which I had returned. One answer served for nearly all—" He is dead." Of all the servants of the family—all the retainers, who are always so numerous about a large country-house—who had been my allies in my boyish sports, and who had so fervently bidden God to bless my parting step—not one remained to welcome my return. All the villagers, too, who had been most connected with "the great house"—who had paid their court by making their landlord's children share in the merriment of their harvest-home, and the joyousness of their Christmas carol;—those, too, who had been my mother's pensioners, and to whom she had made us the dispensers of her bounty, that she might train our young hearts to the exalted pleasure of doing good; —all these, as I made inquiry for them one by one, I was told had disappeared from the scene; and, of course, those who had risen up to fill their places

could feel no interest for me. My recollections of home had not been confined to the physical scene alone—they had naturally included the images of those who dwelt there—and it now seemed almost a mockery to be restored to the spot itself, and to find that all who had peopled it in my heart, were gone for ever. How bitter were my feelings, as the well-known quotation rose in my memory—" I came to the place of my birth, and I said, ' the friends of my youth where are they ?'—and an echo answered—' where are they ?' "—I recollected having admired this as beautiful, when I first read it—alas ! no one knows half its force who has not had occasion to repeat it as I did.

When I was shewn to my bed-room, a new scene of painful recollection presented itself. My sister had had the same room prepared for me, which I had always slept in when I was a boy; to which my brother and I had been removed, when our going to school made us considered too old for the nursery. The room now contained only one bed, but every thing else was strikingly the same as when I left it.

The prints with which my mother had decorated the walls, just before our first return from school—the shelves which had held our little library—even one or two of the mouldering school-books themselves—all combined to call into the most vivid and painful contrast my present and my former self. On the wainscot of dark oak, I found, in a well-remembered corner, the mis-shapen initials of my name,—which I had cut with great labour, and had looked on as a work of infinite skill. On each side the chimney hung the portraits of my brother and myself, painted with the round cheeks, open neck, and flowing hair of ten years old. Now one was in the grave—and the other, at that moment, almost wished to be there also. As I gazed on the rosy careless countenance which had once been my likeness, I scarcely could think that it presented the same being. I felt as the dead might be supposed to feel, if they could behold their earthly form—so totally did a gulf seem placed between my present nature and that of the blooming boy on whom I looked.

It was, as I have said, the month of July, and

the full moon gave perfect light to the scene which lay beneath the window. I threw it open, and looked out upon that well-known, long-loved spot. It was in itself one of great actual beauty—and I dearly loved, and had long regretted it, which made me think it doubly so. The tall towering oak, which so often had been the goal of our race, and given its shadow to our gambols, was outlined on the bright moon-lighted sky behind, in all the majesty of age, and the luxuriant leafiness of summer. Farther on, the moon threw a line of glittering light upon the noble sheet of water which had been to me the means of so much early enjoyment. There, I used to sit for hours fishing on its bank—and there, as my advancing years had caused me to take pleasure in the athletic exercises of youth, I had delighted

" ——————to cleave
" With pliant arm its glassy wave."

In the distance I could see among the trees the blue slate of the cottage where the game-keeper lived, who had been so great an ally of mine, and whose dwelling had been so favourite a haunt. He also

was dead—but he had survived most of his contemporaries, and in his last illness, not long before the time of which I write, he had expressed, my sister told me, deep regret at not living to see master Gilbert come home again. This, and numberless other circumstances, connected with my boyish pursuits, rose in my heart as I gazed on the scene which had witnessed them; and, as I closed the window, I felt that there was one more drop of gall added to the cup of bitterness which my return home had proved.

Alas! said I to myself, and is this the hour of my return home—of my meeting with my friends? —I find my mother and my brother dead—my father in a state which makes it to be wished that he were dead also—and my sister with a chilled heart and a withered frame, which make my soul sink with the contrast between what she was once, and what she is now. All those whose images are indelibly connected in my mind with the abode of my youth are swept away—nothing but the spot itself is left. It is as a skeleton to the human body —the frame-work is still the same, but all which gave

to it life and beauty is withered and vanished. This, I exclaimed with bitterness—this is the happiness of revisiting the scenes of childhood—these are the joys of meeting !

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FRAGMENT VI.

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THERE are few things which strike with a more painful chill upon the heart—at least upon *my* heart—than the unchangedness of physical objects, while Time has dealt destruction and decay upon all else. The scene which we contemplate with dimmed eye and saddened mind, was offered in self-sameness to our view when we were rife with all the nerve of bodily, and all the joyousness of mental, youth. The river glides on, murmuring to the air, and glistening to the sun, as it murmured and glistened in our youth—in the youth of our fathers. The tree which flourished in majesty in our childhood flourishes in majesty still,—for the days of a man's life work no visible change upon the grandeur of vegetable age. Even the works of human hands mock those who reared them;—they remain in beauty and in strength, when the builder has

crumbled into dust :—the tenement of his own body is the only one which he cannot repair. Human frames shoot, ripen, and decay,—human hearts bud, bloom, and wither,—but Nature and natural things remain unchanged—at least, during the time which suffices to work in us rise, maturity, and final fall. And this does not apply solely to long lapse of time. There are none, I am sure, who have suffered any great and sudden calamity without feeling with force the unchanged state of external objects. There is even a sort of sensation of surprise at seeing physical things as they were—indifferent business proceeding as it did—when all within us has been shattered, uprooted, and reversed. Every thing with us is so altered—every thing with them is so painfully the same.

The latter of these causes of suffering it is now, I thank God, many years since I experienced ; the former I never felt to the very full till now. The house, the grounds, the village, are, except in some trifling particulars, unchanged since I left them—the people, with some few exceptions also, are all swept away. And those exceptions !—alas ! they

shew more plainly the tokens of Time and Decay even than the general change of peopling. On the Sunday after my return, I went with my sister to the village church—that church where my mother had taught my little knees to bend in devotion, my almost infant lips to syllable a prayer. As we passed along the aisle to our pew, from outward things I might have thought that only the week had elapsed since I had last been there;—the faces on which I looked shewed that a generation had passed away. There was however *some* change. Over our seat was my brother's monument—opposite to it my mother's! But, above all, I missed the reverend and excellent old man who had been the clergyman when I left home. He used almost to seem to us part of the venerable building in which he prayed. His long white hair, thinned on the forehead and temples—his meagre, but fine and thoughtful, face—and his voice which, though touched with age, still retained both silvery and solemn tones when earnest in prayer, or impassioned in exhortation—all his attributes and appearances fitted him for that simple and sublime office—the

pastor of a country church. His place was now supplied by a young gentleman, who, as he passed to the desk, displayed a Hoby boot from beneath his surplice,—and whose Brutus head and starched neckcloth were a contrast as opposite as might be to the unstudied and patriarchal aspect of him to whom he had succeeded. This young man performed the service with decorum: he read sonorously and well; and preached a sensible sermon with propriety: but the tone of heart-gushing devotion—the austerity of stern reproof—the fervency of glowing exhortation—the soft solemnity of consolation and encouragement—all these were wanting in him,—and these his predecessor to the full possessed.

When the service was ended, I determined to look over the tombstones in the church-yard. *They* would be the truest chronicle of the changes which time had wrought during my absence. I, therefore, walked on only sufficiently to allow the congregation to disperse,—and then returned, while my sister went homeward.

There is one tree—a yew-tree—in the corner of

the church-yard. The old clergyman of whom I have spoken used always to say that he would be buried there—and there he is now buried. It used to be a sort of melancholy jest whenever he spoke of the spot which he had chosen for his long abode. But there was an air of real piety,—a glistening of the grave mild eye—an earnest intonation of the finely sounded voice—which shewed that the levity —if there were any—was that of placid and cheerful looking-onward, not of irreverence or carelessness. This spot fronted the south, he used to say, and the sun would shine, and the grass would grow green, over his head. It also lay within sight of the windows of the parsonage;—and there, where his life had passed in quiet happiness and humble usefulness,—within view of that dwelling, would he set up the staff of his eternal rest.

This anxiety concerning the place of burial is a feeling for which I have never been able to account. It is one which is very general, yet in which I, in no degree, share:—that is, with reference to myself—for, in the case of those dear to us, Reason loses her power, and Feeling alone is heard. As

far as regards myself, I am wholly and utterly careless of the mode or place of burial;—it is to me a matter of the most truly perfect indifference what becomes of the carrion-like carcass when the informing spirit is gone. But, with respect to those we have loved in life, the feelings, as I have said, gain mastery over the reason;—we cannot bear that what remains of *them* should not meet with all reverence. There is, also, a gratification,—mournful, indeed, to the last degree, but not the less real, pure, and lofty,—in visiting the grave of buried love. While sorrow exists in its first intensity, we cannot, it is true, *bear* thus to be brought into immediate contact with the memorials of that by which it has been caused;—but when time has wrought its soothing work upon us—(and time *must* soothe all grief, for the grief on which time has *not* power can last but little, for it will kill—) when despair has subsided into sorrow, and sorrow again has softened into sadness—then, indeed, to visit and to mourn over the tomb of what we have loved on earth, is food for the heart. But all this has no connexion with anxiety for *our own* burial;

and it has always been to me matter of extreme surprise to see that feeling so universal among all classes and descriptions of men. The pious, desire to lie in holy ground,—as if the spirit did not answer for its own deeds in the flesh, or could be freed from that responsibility by the sanctuary of consecrated soil. The pure and simple-minded wish for a country burial,—that they may lie among the peaceful and glorious works of God—and not in those revolting charnels which speak of all the worst things caused by great congregations of men. Even persons, who are the farthest removed from any thing which can be considered connected with sentiment or romance, entertain this feeling in a very strong degree. It is very generally known that the late Lord C——d, of whose life it is quite unnecessary to speak, left in his will a request to be buried in a certain spot in Switzerland, where, under a tree on the banks of a beautiful lake, he "had meditated on the mutability of all human things."

The key to the prevalence of these feelings I take to be the almost impossibility, in even the

most spiritualized minds, to shake off the ideas and desires of humanity. Our only conceptions are those which are grounded on what we see and experience in this world; and we thus almost fancy that what is gratifying and pleasurable to the physical body, will be so to the immaterial spirit. Hence the "cold grave"—the "dark grave"—the "silent grave"—are the terms generally used to create a melancholy feeling with respect to death and inhumation. We know that coldness, darkness, and silence are repugnant to our corporeal frame—we know that green spots and sun-shiny places are pleasant to it—we know that, in this state of being, we love to haunt scenes which circumstances have made dear to us,—and hence we carry the same notions into spiritual life, and name as places of burial those spots which would give pleasure to that body which so soon ceases to exist after it is placed there.

I found the grave of the old clergyman in the spot which I have described. It was marked only by a single head-stone, now become moss-green, and fallen awry, from one side of it having sunken

somewhat into the earth. There was on it this plain inscription—"Sacred to the memory of the Reverend ***** ******, forty years minister of this Parish."—I could not help feeling a sensation of mingled sorrow and anger that the tomb of one who had been "forty years" the minister—the pious, kind, benevolent, truly christian minister—of the village, should bear such evident tokens of indifference and neglect. Was there none among the many whom he had loved, whom he had obliged, whom he had served, to preserve the memorial of his useful and beneficent life from this forlorn and desecrated aspect?—Had a few short years so totally wiped out gratitude and affection from the hearts of those who had loved *him*, that his very existence should now seem to be forgotten?—The droppings from the branching yew had discoloured the stone, and the unsound and frequently-stirred earth in which it stood, had caused it to fall from its upright position. Was there *no* friendly hand to prevent or cleanse away its stains?—to preserve or restore its stability? But it is always thus in English church-yards. The rank grass and un-

sightly weeds are suffered to spring unchecked,—giving token of that which the mind always strives to hide from its consciousness—the foulness and corruption below. The tomb-stones, which, perhaps, recent affliction, or scrupulous decorum, has embellished and made shapely, become, like that of my poor old friend, worn and time-stained, untended, unregarded, utterly forgotten. It is very possible, and I believe it is the fact, that the English do not grieve less or more shortly for friends who die, than any other nation; but it is certain that the neglected, deserted, look of our places of burial shews more strongly than any thing else that speedy passing away of affection and remembrance which it is vain to deny, and yet which it is so chillingly painful to admit.

I passed on from this humble and deserted tomb with a swelling and saddened heart,—and I sought out one, which, just before my leaving England, I had seen receive its tenant. I knew the spot, and therefore easily discovered it — but had I not known where to seek it, I scarcely should have been able to find it otherwise. It was sunken

deeply into the ground, which hid part of the inscription, the rest of which was almost equally obliterated by time. It differed scarcely at all in colour from the grass among which it lay rather than stood,—and might, any where else, have been taken for an unhewn stone. This was all that remained to tell of one of the most interesting and gifted beings which it was ever my lot to meet—of almost the deepest affliction that I ever witnessed. It stands over the grave of a young man of the name of Lyal, with whom I was at school;—he was one of most promising brilliancy of talent, and had died at nineteen. I could just trace out, among the short green and yellow moss which grows, like a second surface, over an unheeded stone, the words—" aged nineteen years." There never was a more simple, touching elegy, than these few words—" aged nineteen years." What a tale do they tell of crushed hope and blasted expectation —of the broken-heartedness of parents and family, and, it may be, of a still more vivid affection! And yet my sorrow over the grave of a young person, more especially one of high talent and

warm feeling like this, is never unmixed—I always call to mind the touching and true epitaph quoted, or more probably composed, by Madame de Staël —" Ne me plaignez pas—si vous saviez combien de peines ce tombeau m'a épargné!"—How few, indeed, are the chances such a person possesses of happiness here—how many of misfortune!

I was in the country when Lyal died; and, having been a school-fellow and a youthful friend, I was asked to attend the funeral. It was an office indeed of pain, but I did not hesitate to go. A young man of such distinguished promise was naturally the idol of his parents; in dreadful addition, he was their only child! Of the mother's grief at the time I cannot speak, for, of course, I saw it not; but to use a homely but most forceful phrase, " She never held up her head afterwards." The father's sorrow I did see, for he would not be dissuaded from being himself the chief-mourner:—he said he was so in heart, and he would be in form.

Alas! what a morning was that! Young and happy as I then was, the scene made an impression

upon me, which long subsequent time, and deep personal suffering, have been insufficient to efface. When I arrived at the house, I was admitted by a servant, whom I recognised as having been the tutor and associate of poor Lyal in his field sports. The man said nothing, but the unspeakable look which he gave me as he shewed me to the room where the company was assembled, was the very epitome and essence of speechless sorrow and affection. But on occasions like these, circumstances of contrast add pain as much as those of parallel,—at least it was so in this case. When I entered the room where the mourners were, I could not but be forcibly struck with the strong difference of expression on the countenance of the servant and the friends (friends!) of the deceased. There were about a dozen persons present, who stood in detached groups, talking, as I found, of the gossip of the county, and the general news of the day. A young man, who had been at school with Lyal and me, came up to me as I entered, and, after saying, "Poor fellow, who would have thought it!"—in a tone as if he considered it necessary to say some-

thing on the subject which occasioned our meeting, —began to discuss the merits of a new horse which I had seen him on a few days before. The wretched father was, I need scarcely say, not present; his feelings would, I think, have imposed some restraint upon these heartless profaners of the name of friend. My heart sickened to see the hollowness of what is called friendship. Splendour of genius, warmth of feeling, beauty of person,—all these, joined in one for whom they professed interest, and cut off in the bloom of years, could not for one short hour suspend the thoughts of their shallow and frivolous pursuits,—even when they were gathered, as I may say, around his corpse! Refreshments and wine, I recollect, were handed round. This revolted me in an especial manner. It is, I believe, usual at funerals,—yet it is to me something even repugnant to have thus the usual means of sustaining life brought into such startling contrast with the emblems, the very presence, of death.

These feelings were more strengthened than interrupted by the entrance of the undertaker to

furnish us with scarves and hat-bands. He was a busy, bustling animal, whose *desouci* look, and mercenary simper, shewed plainly that all he did was "in the way of business." We have no right to expect grief from an hireling; but there is something revolting in seeing the trappings of woe borne by a being whose mind is engrossed by the paltry pounds which he can make by their display.

Wilverham Cross is about five miles from the house of Lyal's father; and thither we proceeded in mourning coaches, and, of course, at a foot's pace. I never remember to have seen a day of greater gloom. The earth was bound in one of the severest frosts I have ever witnessed,—one of that kind and degree which casts a shade of blackness over the whole atmosphere. Even in our sorrow we are physical beings; and the slowness of our pace, and the intense cold which I suffered, added, I confess, to my sadness and depression. They, perhaps, contributed also to make me feel still more indignant at the indifference of my companions. There were three others in the coach with me, who, like myself, had been early friends of him whom we were at-

tending to the grave. From their conversation and manners who would have thought that coach to be a mourning one! One of these young men was fond of hunting, and hoped the frost might break up; another preferred skating, and wished it to continue. The third was an Oxonian, and occupied three miles of our foot-pace journey with the detail of a plan which a stage-coachman had communicated to him of a new way of rough-shoeing horses in a frost!—And these were the mourners at the burial of the young, the feeling, and the gifted!

We quitted the carriages at the church-gate; and here, for the first time, I saw the father. He was leaning on the arm of a relation, and tottered up the pathway, next after the coffin, into the church. He held his handkerchief to his face, and the hood of his mourning cloak was drawn over his eyes; yet I could distinguish the marble whiteness of the cheek, and the quivering of the muscles, which shewed but too plainly what was passing within. A portion of the service was performed in the church; and this, perhaps, was the most mournful part of the whole. It

was on a week day, so that the church, which was large, was empty with the exception of ourselves. The piercing cold struck to the very bones, from the effect of the stone-pavement of the church, and its vast uninhabited space. The measured and sonorous tones of the clergyman echoed through the void of the large building with a sadness and solemnity which went to the soul; and, at every pause of his voice, was heard the father's deep sob of half-suppressed agony. At a certain period in the service, we went out to the grave. A few stragglers of the village had gathered round it, to gaze on the finery of the funeral show. Some few appeared to look on it with feeling and compassion, but the greater part seemed to regard it merely as a sight; while others, with gaping mouths and staring eyes, gave no clue by which to trace, on their wooden countenances, what ideas the solemnity might cause. There was one woman with a wailing infant, which she was striving to hush. Its cries attracted my notice;—and the commencement and the close of life being thus brought into such immediate opposition caused,

perhaps, the deepest feeling which I experienced during that melancholy day.

The sinking the coffin into the grave is the most impressive part of the ceremony of burial. It is then that the dead seem finally cut off from all connexion with the world; it is then that we lose sight of them for ever! At the moment that the coffin sounded on the bottom of the grave, I looked towards the father. His face at that moment is indelibly graven on my memory; but I cannot embody its expression in words. It made me right well understand why the painter of old evaded the picturing of parental agony. Such visitations, indeed, are far beyond all painting, whether of the pencil, or the pen.

These recollections crowded upon my mind as I lingered over Lyal's grave;—but, after a time, I remembered what was my chief purpose in thus exploring the church-yard, and passed on to gather from its records the memorials of the humble friends of my boyhood and early youth. Alas! they were nearly all here:—one by one I lighted upon almost all their names. I paused for a brief

space over that of an old farmer; who, in the sturdy independence of an English yeoman, had once beaten me when I was a boy, for thrashing, with the petulance and oppression of a school-boy, one of his sons who had in some way given me offence. I recollected going, brimming with indignation, to complain to my mother of the insolence of him, one of our tenants, in striking me, *who was a gentleman!*—but the only redress I got from her was being made to learn by heart the speech of Henry V. to the Lord Chief Justice.—I know it to this hour.—The old man who had beaten me had done it in fatherly wrath, and complete justice—but he did not in the least bear malice, or fail in respect to his landlord, whom he loved,—for he came, the next day, up to the Court to apologize,—when I was made to beg *his* pardon,—and we shook hands together. I question if any one of the villagers bade me a more cordial farewell, or regretted my departure more.—Poor fellow, here he lay now!

I found also the grave of one, whose age had been nearer my own—being a young man when I

was a boy—who, as he was the son of the gardener, had been a good deal about the house, and had initiated me into the mysteries of bat-fowling—climbing the tall elms for rooks' nests—and many other accomplishments of a similar sort. He was one of the most active and bold fellows I ever saw. I recollect his climbing a stupendous ash-tree, which stands near the centre of the village—a sort of trysting-tree, round which the villagers were used to assemble on Sundays and on summer evenings. This tree was accounted impossible to climb—and there was a tradition in the village of a lad having been killed in making the attempt. Its bole shot up, round and smooth, and far too bulky to be clasped, to the height of about forty feet, and there was a huge wart-like excrescence which it was considered impracticable to get beyond. As I stood beside the grave in which mouldered the dust of this man, whom I had left so vigorous in limb, and so instinct with animal life, I called to mind this scene of his prowess which, from emulation, had nearly caused me to break my neck half a dozen times. It was on

an evening in spring—just after the leaves had budded, and before they were fully blown. There had been rain in the day, and the surface of the tree was consequently slippery, and therefore even more difficult and dangerous than usual. Some of the men, assembled on the bench which surrounded its base, were remarking upon this, and said to the man of whom I speak, that, climber as he was, he could not climb *that* tree. "I'll try at least," he said, and immediately pulled off his coat, and, to the astonishment, almost horror, of us all, began to ascend the tree. Some endeavoured to dissuade him, but he paid no attention to their prudent counsels. On he went, *swarming*, as the phrase is for clambering up a tree where there ,are no branches, by griping it with the arms and legs. The length of boughless stem made the strength and exertion of muscle necessary for the achievement prodigious. He surmounted the *hump* of the tree much more easily than we expected, and he got without accident to the highest bough which could support his weight—but, as he began to descend, his foot slipped on the wet bark,—and he

fell. My heart—and I am sure that of all the crowd, which by this time was great—leaped to my throat—I expected he would be dashed to pieces. But to our infinite relief as well as surprise, he had not fallen ten feet—which, as the top of the tree was spreading, was among boughs,—when he caught hold of one of them, and swung himself actively and lightly again upright. I now looked upon his tomb, and I thought of the lines in that most powerful, but neglected poem—The Grave;—which are suggested by that of the strong man:—

" Strength too! thou surly and less gentle boast
Of those that laugh loud at the village ring,
A fit of common sickness pulls thee down
With greater ease than e'er thou didst the stripling
That rashly dar'd thee to unequal fight!
* * * ——— What now avail
The strong-built sinewy limbs, and well-spread shoulders?
* * * ——— See how the great Goliath,
Just like a child that brawl'd itself to rest,
Lies still. ———————"

With respect the 'giant-like use' of this 'giant's strength,'—these fine lines are totally inapplicable; but, as regards its possession, they might have been written for him.—Alas! how changed was he

now!—yet I thought that I—I who lived, who still existed in the same being,—was almost as totally dissimilar from what I then was, as this poor fellow, whose stalwart frame was wasted into its original dust. His death had been characteristic of his activity, his courage, and his generous heart;—the legend on the head-stone (and I had before heard it from my sister) told that he lost his life in attempting to save some boys under whom the ice had broken on the village pond.

At last I went to *my mother's* tomb. It stood in the church which was now opened for evening service, but to which no one was yet come. The stone which marks the spot where she is laid, is, as I have before mentioned, opposite our pew. It is very simple, and bears only her maiden and married name, and the date of her birth, her marriage, and her death. Simple indeed is her epitaph, but never was there a human being who merited an higher elegy—But those who deserve it the most, need it the least. *Her* epitaph is engraven on the hearts of those who loved her, and they were all, lowly as well as high, by whom she was

surrounded. My mother was indeed, a woman *comme il y en a peu*. Gifted with great powers of mind, and keen and ardent feelings, she at the same time possessed a gay playfulness of manner, and a considerate kindness for all around her, that made her the idol of the circle of which she was the centre point. She had also, I do in truth believe, *the best* heart that ever throbbed within a human bosom. The milk of human kindness existed in her with brimming and overflowing fullness. Actively and personally benevolent, she was worshipped rather than beloved by the poor around. She was not content with alms-giving—but would seek out objects of pity, and console as well as relieve them. The rich are in general little aware how much one kind word from them, or even their mere presence, is felt by the suffering poor. The sickness of a poor person is indeed the most dreadful of all things. We know how wretched it is, even when we are surrounded with all the appliances and comforts which wealth confers—what must it then be without any of them—without medicine or medical aid—without appro-

priate, perhaps without any, food—without sufficient covering or perfect shelter—and (sad completion of wretchedness!) with the knowledge that every day of illness is an increase to poverty already biting and extreme These things my mother knew full well—and there was not a sick bed in the village, into the wants of which she did not personally inquire—not one which she did not, in a greater or a less degree, personally tend, succour, and support. Nor was she indiscriminate in her charity;—she was not indeed one of those scrupulously just persons who relieve suffering worth, but leave suffering error to perish;—No, she would relieve *all* in extremity, but deserving was an indispensable passport to her permanent favour. Her religion too, was, what is alas! so rare—warm, practical, and ardent, but without the slightest tinge of intolerance or fanaticism—equally remote from indifference on the one hand, and bigotry on the other. I always—as indeed, well I might—adored my mother; and one of the chief yearnings which my heart had felt towards home, was the hope of being re-united to her. In the period of

my deepest distress, it was to her my heart turned, and, from her letters of pure piety and extreme and perfect affection, that it had found its chief relief. I had concealed from her, indeed—that I might not cause her the severest and unnecessary pain—the darker circumstances of my story. She knew only that my wife had been snatched from me in the fulness of her youth, and of our mutual fondness — but she was ignorant of the events which preceded our union. To being once more restored to the society of such a mother, I had always looked as the highest solace which my heart could ever know—and, as she died only a very few years before I left India, her disappearance from the scene of my dear home, was almost as cruel a disappointment as it was a deep sorrow.

Alas! how bitter was that sorrow now—now that I gazed on the emblem and record of her death !—now that her being lost to me for ever was told to my eyes in written characters, as well as to my heart by deprivation!—I remained I know not how long on the spot;—my past sorrows and my present, mingled in one flood of uncontrollable

emotion, which would almost have burst my heart, had it not at length found vent in tears.

I was awakened from my abstraction by the sound of feet—I looked round, and saw that it was produced by the clerk, who was come to prepare for service. I turned hastily away,—and hurried out by the small door in the chancel, that I might shun his observation.

* * * * *

FRAGMENT VII.

* * * * *

I DO not believe there ever were two brothers, so nearly of an age, such good friends as Frederick and myself. There was only a year between us—we were sent at the same time to the same school —we were similarly treated in every respect. And yet these circumstances, which commonly heighten emulation into rivalry, and impregnate that rivalry with every species of jealous and envious feeling, —served, in our case, only to render our union the closer and more affectionate. We had our quarrels, to be sure, like other boys, whether brothers or not; but they were not frequent,—they were always sudden and short-lived,—and never left the shadow of a trace behind them. It would have required, indeed, a most malice-bearing disposition to have fostered the slightest feeling of ill-will against my brother. Poor, poor, Frederick! what a fine, gallant, joyous,

generous spirit it was! Such animation—such fire—such irrepressible gaiety—such inexhaustible good-humour!—I never knew any one who had more of 'the salt of youth' in him—who possessed to a greater degree that open, active, and elastic air and manner which betoken a heart happy in itself; and (if the expression be not paradoxical,) desirous of removing unhappiness in all others, yet scarcely anticipating or prepared to meet with it in any.

It is usual to think that such constant and unclouded liveliness cannot co-exist with keen or strong feeling;—at least after the first years of youth. Nor does it often. For, alas! how few are there who pass those years, without having done or borne *something* which must operate as a blight upon the constancy, at least, of that which is commonly understood by the term of "good spirits." I say their 'constancy,'—for their occasional existence is perhaps more to be observed in those who have undergone severe suffering, than in any other description of persons;—inasmuch as it is necessary for them to use extraneous and unnatural ex-

ertion as well to free themselves from present pain, as to prevent their sinking into a state of irreclaimable despondency. But such spirits, when once raised, do not *continue* to be forced. There is no greater or more general mistake than to suppose this—as all who can judge from experience full well know. They are for the time *real*, at least;—not so fresh or so natural as those which have sprung spontaneously,—but still unfeigned. They are like the excitation produced by wine—the effect, namely, of a foreign stimulus, and which would not have existed without that stimulus,—but yet, remaining after its application has ceased. The excitation of wine, also, tallies with the other characteristic which I have mentioned as belonging to spirits originally forced,—the being of a flushed and feverish nature, in comparison with the healthful joyousness arising from a happy heart. But, the true, the *terrible*, difference between them, is in the revulsion which follows the gaiety which has been forcibly raised. To continue the parallel, it resembles the sick, painful, depression of the morning after a night of excess:—

"Oh! think not my spirits are always as light
And as free from a pang as they seem to you now;
Nor expect that the heart-beaming smile of to-night
Will return with to-morrow to brighten my brow!"

No! it is that morrow,—(or rather that reaction which the poet * has here meant the morrow to typify)—which is the Ithuriel spear to the brightness and gaiety we see glancing and flashing in society. Follow those who have been the lightest and the loudest—the most brilliant and most fluent—follow them to their homes—to the silence of night, and the solitude of their chamber,—and tell me what proportion of them you find who carry these spirits with them across their threshold. I have qualified the expression of 'to-morrow' in the beautiful stanza I have quoted above, for this very reason;—it is *before* the morrow, that the change takes place. It is before the morrow that the full bright tide ebbs, and leaves the barren sand, or the foul slime, of the heart, exposed. I am sure there are many of those whose eyes glance over these pages, who intimately feel, in their own

* Moore.

instance, the truth of what I say. If there be any one who reads this at the time I have cited,—let him ask his heart the question. Let him look back to what he appeared—to what he *was*—an hour ago.—Let him seize and analyze the feeling with which he has just entered his own room.—*He* will know the truth of the delineation in both its points—in the temporary reality, in the sickening cessation.

It is, I should imagine, the great prevalence of these appearances in society, that has given rise to the opinion I have alluded to above—namely, that those whose gaiety is constant and unchecked, cannot have much feeling. But this, though often true, is not so always. It is admitted that many and many a young heart is, in origin, not happy only, but gay, buoyant, lively, overflowing,—yet, at the same time, warm and even sensitive. It is the infrequency of such a heart surviving many years of maturity without having its warmth and sensitiveness so called into action, as to check and even annul its happier attributes—it is the infrequency of a fate so blessed as this, that has given

birth to the axiom I have been discussing. But *when* a lot *is* so cast—when nothing *does* occur to overcloud or to chill these beautiful and blissful dispositions,—then, indeed, it is equally unjust and false to believe that this very brightness and beauty are but the effects and the tokens of all that must deprive them of value and attraction. On the contrary,—they, rather, are typical of a heart brimming with the milk of human kindness, which no adverse circumstance has soured or dried up. Such persons, (and there never existed one of whom it was more true than of my brother,) such persons are gay because they are happy,—and because they have constantly seen happiness around them;—because they look upon the world as upon one scene of enjoyment,—and, above all, *because they have never been undeceived* in so regarding it. So far from the gushing spirits of such persons arising from want of heart, they, on the contrary, give to it new brilliancy and grace. They may be compared to happy events occurring on a beautiful day of summer—when the bright sun, and the blown flowers, and the full life of

all animated nature confer additional ornament on intrinsic joy.

My brother was one of the strongest exemplifiactions of this, for never was there more affectionate a creature. In our earliest days of all, before we left home for the first time, his warmth of good feeling made him as much the favourite of the whole house, as his ardent mirth and liveliness rendered him its plaything and delight. Those were the happiest days of *my* life, and I believe they are the same with every man. His schooldays themselves are, certainly, not to be compared to them. In the whole world, I do believe, there is no state of society so perfect as that of "a family" in England. It has not been my lot, alas! to live much in that species of intercourse; but the time which I *have* passed in it has fully sufficed to shew me how superior its pleasures are to the fiercer and less sinless enjoyments of worldly life. In a family where there are intellectual pursuits and open feelings;—where the children are made, to a great degree, the companions and friends of the parents —instead of being led to regard the society of

those parents as formality and restraint;—where affection, varied and modified according to the age and capabilities of each, spreads, like the sap in the tree, from the stem, through all the branches, to the tenderest shoot;—in such a family as this —and in no country are they so many as in England—is chosen, I do verily believe, the dwelling-place of as much happiness as *can* dwell on earth. Such a family was ours. Though we were reared with much care as to mental advancement,—and with strictness, even, as regarded morality and, still more, religion,—yet there was a glow of kindliness and cordiality in the heads of that family, which caused its pleasures, however innocent, never to become insipid—which prevented its duties from ever being overspread with gloom. Too often instruction of all kinds is placed in the light of punishment—religious instruction in that of a severe and unpleasant duty. But, with us, this was totally avoided. I do not exactly mean to say, that we regarded book as pleasanter than play, or listening to a long sermon as more agreeable than certain other less didactic kinds of composition. But great

part of our play *was* books—and an exclusion, on Sunday, from the morning church, or the evening family-prayer, would have been to us the most severely felt of all privations.

It was, I believe, this mode of early bringing-up which joined my brother's heart and mine in such fond and lasting friendship. He was with his regiment at the time I went to India,—but while the fleet lay wind-bound at Portsmouth, I received from him a letter of farewell, worthy indeed of his noble and affectionate heart. He cited as a circumstance of strong additional regret our having parted without any idea of what a separation that parting was to precede. My going to India was suddenly determined upon, and, at the time he joined his regiment we thought we should meet again in the course of a year.

How well I recollect his going! He was to set off at daylight in the morning, and had taken leave the night before. But I got up to see him off, and drank a cup of coffee with him at his early breakfast. He was in the highest possible spirits—starting to join his regiment for the first time,

with all the pride of an epaulette at eighteen, and (as it was time of peace) with no very lengthened prospect of separation from his friends. Nothing can by possibility be more gloomy and wretched than a breakfast of this kind by candlelight. Uncomfortable in ourselves from having risen so long before our usual hour, we perhaps doubly feel its unpleasant and unnatural appearances. Every thing looks comfortless, out of season, and out of place. It is enough to sadden a light heart, or doubly to depress a heavy one. But Frederick saw and felt nothing of all this. He talked, and whistled, and jested, and laughed—he was setting off on a pleasant errand—there was no reason why he should be sad,—and he *was* not. "God bless you, old boy"—he said to me, as he wrung my hand, and sprang into the chaise—"take care of yourself—and take care of Oberon *, and have him in high condition for me at Christmas. I will try to get away sooner if I can, but at latest you will see me then."——I never saw him afterwards!

* A favourite hunter.

But, though we never met again, our feelings towards each other remained unaltered. In me, placed as I was in a situation which gave me every reason ceaselessly to revert to the friends whom I had left,—this was to be expected. But with him it was quite different. He was in the full swing of an animated and active life;—at one time with his regiment—at another in town—at another at Wilverham—always ardent, always enjoying, always happy. Then came his marriage—one of unalloyed, unclouded joy in all respects:—But nothing,—no length of time, no distraction of mind, no variety of pursuits,—not even the full flood of continued fortune,—could ever for an instant render him neglectful or unmindful of me. His letters were always equally constant, equally affectionate, and (what is perhaps more than either) equally *long*.

Soon after my return, I had a most convincing and touching proof of the continued prevalence of this feeling. My sister gave to me to look over a diary which Frederick had kept—if any thing so irregular can be called by that name. Nothing,

indeed, could be more characteristic than the manner in which the entries had been made in this journal. Sometimes, for a month or so, there would be regular notices of every day;—then again a year might intervene without a word. Under some dates there would be forty or fifty pages written evidently at a sitting—and, perhaps, on turning over the next leaf, you would find an abstract and abbreviation such as this—

12th Dec. 179—
1st Feb. 179— } at Wilverham.

It reminded me of the account-book of an Irish baronet in one of Colman's plays:—"To the man who sweeps the crossing in Bond-street—one shilling"—"To sundries, 7000*l*." But throughout the whole of this most miscellaneous and desultory mass, I constantly lighted upon my own name;—"Wrote to Gilbert"—"Received a letter from Gilbert"—were the beginnings, and probably the causes, of several of the longest entries, full of the warmest and most overflowing kindliness. The reading those made at the period, and on the subject, of the great misfortune of my life, affected

me more strongly than any thing which had happened to me since. Even the very last sentence (an incomplete one) which he ever wrote, contains an affectionate allusion to me. It was written in his tent the night before he fell, and he probably was called away in the middle of it on some business relating to the next day*.

But, on another score also, this journal touched me deeply. I have said that it was kept, off and on, during the course of several years;—so that, by turning over a few leaves,—or, at most, by passing from one of the note-books to another,—I could trace at once the changes which those years had operated upon most of the individuals of whom mention was made. With respect to my brother himself, this was a less melancholy task than it would have been of almost any other man. His glowing disposition never knew a chill;—his life was a happy one, and it was *short*. Hence, throughout these notes, embracing a period of about twelve years, his tone undergoes little variation beyond that of the matur-

* Colonel Earle was killed at Alexandria.—Ed.

ing of mind, and the accumulation of knowledge, which naturally and necessarily take place in every man between the ages of eighteen and thirty. But with regard to those concerning whom he speaks incidentally, the contrast occasioned by time is, of course, apparent: *more* apparent, indeed, I have no doubt, to one who, like myself, looked upon the journal in the gross—than to the writer himself, who formed its contents from time to time, in irregular snatches, and on every possible variety of subject and situation. It is more than probable that Frederick never scanned his diary with this view;—very likely, indeed, he never had all its component parts together at one time. For, the note-books in which it was kept, were found, after his death, some at Wilverham, some at my father's house in town, some at his own—while only the two latest were with him in Egypt. There were altogether eleven of them—bought at different times, and in the most different places, as was manifest from their variety of size, description, and manufacture. *He*, evidently, never considered them at all as a regular record; and wrote in the most careless as well as the most desul-

tory manner. But to his surviving friends they have been indeed precious, as displaying his unveiled and unstudied thoughts and feelings during so many years of his life. Unstudied, I mean, in expression, —for, of all men, his heart was the most single, his manner the most spontaneous and real. But still, there always is some difference, even with the most frank and open, between what is meant solely for their own eyes, and that which must be seen by the world. It is necessary, it is right—that it should be so;—delicacy and consideration for others alike demand it. Even those who really loved and esteemed each other quarrelled in the *Palais de la Vérité*. Neither is there, I think, any dissimulation in this;—any more than we can accuse a man of hypocrisy, because he sits in his own room in his morning gown and slippers, but puts on his coat and cravat when he goes out.

Looking over poor Frederick's journal has thus shewn me the *dessous des cartes* of many a circumstance, and many a person, to which the white side would never give a clue. But I am not going to make public that which he wrote with

all the abandonment and unreserve, arising from the very idea that it would always remain private. No; —I consider those who give to the world the secret and inmost thoughts and feelings of their deceased friends, to be guilty of the worst and meanest breach of confidence—inasmuch as there is no one left to call them to account for it.

But I shall make two or three extracts from his diary, on subjects where there is no such betrayal of private feeling—inasmuch as there is now no sort of reason why any word which I shall transcribe should be concealed. I shall make public none of those little secrecies of opinion and remark, to which I have alluded. My quotations shall be of a nature to which Frederick himself, if he were alive, would not, I am confident, object. I am desirous of doing this, that I may give an example of that comparison and contrast of the same persons at different times, which I have stated to be among the chief causes of the interest with which I have read my brother's manuscript. I have culled the following extracts upon this principle, and with this view. It will be perceived that the style is familiar and care-

less, and has undergone no verbal correction;—for I have thought it best to leave the whole in its original reality, even at the expense of the occasional inelegancies and inaccuracies of expression which haste and carelessness naturally produce.—I have, therefore, not altered a word.

Of Mr. Dallas I myself knew but little—but I did see him once or twice before I went abroad. My brother became acquainted with him during the year he was at Oxford, and once brought him for a week to Wilverham. After I left England, he became Frederick's chief associate, and chosen friend. The following is dated at the house of Mr. D.'s father, in Norfolk.

"*Kipplestone Park, Sept.* 10, 1792.

"Yesterday, as we were coming home from shooting, it was a very hot day, and we went to a farm-house to make interest for a draught of home-brewed. Dallas proposed it, saying, as he pointed to a substantial cottage at a little distance, that he could not only promise me a mug of admirable ale, —but that he would shew me the prettiest country

lass within ten miles. He had discovered them himself, he said, only a few days before, on a similar occasion,—and he had brought me this way, half on purpose, that he might prosecute his acquaintance with both.

" It was between four and five o'clock, and the day had been extremely hot. The sun, however, was now declining,—and as our path lay along the eastern skirt of a wood, the cool deep shade of the trees gave a refreshing and very grateful contrast to the glowing and baked appearance of the open field beyond. We walked gently along, enjoying the change—for we had been out many hours. We thus approached the cottage slowly, and were partially concealed in our advance by the trees—the house standing at the extremity of the wood. As we drew nigh, I perceived a girl sitting, with her work, on the bench which is usually placed by the side of cottage-doors. She was singing;—Dallas put his hand upon my arm to stop me, and said in a low voice ' There she is!'

" I had thus means to survey her leisurely—and I confess I was surprised. I had expected to see

a blowsy country-girl, with very red cheeks, and still redder arms—whose beauty consisted in youth and freshness, and buxom make, and perhaps a bright pair of eyes. But this was a very different creature. Her form was certainly round and full, —and her cheek shone with a healthful bloom,— but she had none of the coarseness which is the usual concomitant of rustic beauty. I cannot quite say that the hand which plied the needle was the whitest I have seen—(the long sleeve prevented my judging of the arm), but the glimpse of the neck which the crossed handkerchief permitted, betrayed a texture and a colour of skin which many a fine lady might envy as she puts on her pearl necklace. [*Par parenthese*, nothing is so trying and true a criterion of the complexion as how it shews with pearls; and I strongly recommend no lady to wear them without the fullest certainty that they assimilate, instead of contrasting, with the skin on which they rest.] The pretty cottager seemed to possess this most delicate ingredient of female loveliness; and the fine relief which it furnished to the beautiful hair which was clustered (somewhat *artistement*, I thought) from

beneath her cap, added greatly to that absence of all coarseness of appearance, of which I have spoken. Her voice, too, was not what we should expect in one of her degree;—that is, her *singing* voice,—for the sweetness of the natural organ knows no limit of birth or station, while its application to music is affected (independently of direct tuition) by a familiarity with modulated sounds scarcely attainable in humble, or at least in rustic, life. But maugre this my theory, they were certainly very sweet notes, sung in a very simple yet expressive manner, which I heard yesterday, as we stood gazing on that charming picture—a beautiful woman,—made more charming, too, by her unconsciousness of our gaze. I recollect Gilbert used to say—and I always perfectly agreed with him—that painters ought to contrive means to make their studies for portraits when the objects were ignorant that they were so doing. When people sit regularly for their picture, there is always a made-up look—half primness, half pertness, all want of nature;—a heavy dull fixedness, or a theatrical assumption of energy or thought, equally far from

the real and unstrained expression of the features. Now, if I were an artist, whenever I painted a woman, whose beauty was such that I might have done so from my own choice as well as from her vanity,—I would steal upon her at some moment like this—when, unconscious of being observed, her countenance was in its natural, and *therefore* its most beautiful, state; when, with the head bent down over her work or her book, I might draw the fine sweep of the neck, without the alloy of any *efforts* at grace,—or, if I preferred the upraised look of solitary thought, that I might catch the expression of the eye, without any false language being thrown into it.

"All this is a little high-flown, perhaps, to be excited by a farmer's daughter sitting at her cottage door, but certainly she *did* excite it;—for I thought what a pretty picture she would make—and that again brought up my ideas concerning pictures in general. At last, we began to fear we should be observed thus skulking behind the trees, so we advanced towards the vision which had been the object of our contemplation.

She recognised Dallas—(Hang the fellow, I grudged him his prior acquaintance),—and welcomed us both with a very pleasing and graceful modesty of manner. Real modesty it in truth seemed to be; —for, though certainly conscious of her beauty, and of its natural attraction to the eyes of two young men—to say nothing of D.'s dropping a gentle hint touching the early repetition of his accidental visit; —in despite, I say, of the gratified consciousness unavoidable in a girl's mind, from these causes,— her whole demeanour was marked by a quiet purity equally far from prudishness and affectation. We staid some time;—indeed, my companion seemed in no hurry to terminate his visit—so that I had full leisure to contemplate her. She is certainly exceedingly pretty—more than pretty. Her clear skin, mantling on the cheek with the young blood of health, and on the brow and neck transparently white —her brilliant hair—and her general contour of feature,—I had seen as she sat at the door. But now I observed the gracefulness of her form—her springy and elastic gait—and, still more, the beauty of her large eyes as they brightened into a smile, or sank

bashfully down as she listened to what Dallas said to her. As I looked at them both, I thought to myself that it probably would be better for all parties if their fathers' houses were in rather less near neighbourhood.

" We staid so long that we were late for dinner; —and I thought D. told more lies than were quite necessary concerning the cause of our detention. He took the words out of my mouth with a deprecating look; and, without the least compunction, extended our circuit to double its real distance, and unmercifully ran a thorn into the foot of his best dog into the bargain. The farm-house, and its comfortable cheer, and its pretty hostess, seemed to have vanished altogether from his memory,—and I did not think it exactly my cue to refresh it. There was dancing in the evening, and I had scarcely any opportunity of speaking to him—so before I went to bed, I went to his room to have some talk with him touching our day's adventure, and the issue towards which it seemed to me to be tending.

" When I entered the room, I found him sitting in his dressing gown writing. By the glance of his eye, and the curl of his lip, I guessed the sub-

ject of his labours. 'What,' said I, 'writing a sonnet to pretty Susan's eye-brow?' 'Something like it,' he answered; 'I have written only a couple of stanzas, but you may see what I have done.'— 'Susan,' I replied, taking the paper, 'is not a name for poetry, unless it be a good homely ballad, and you know she has not "black eyes," however fitted you may, in your modesty, consider yourself to be her "sweet William."' The verses were as follows:—

I.

I must confess that it is not unpleasant
To me to gaze upon a lovely creature,
E'en though that lovely creature be a peasant;
Whose beauty joins complexion, form, and feature,
Whose hair is like the plumage of the pheasant,
And who, still more than all, has to complete her
Picture, the rose's richest tinge to streak
The smooth clear skin of her transparent cheek.

II.

Something like all this have I seen to day;
A cheek which would be delicately fair,
And *mignon* hands which would be white, but they
Are tinged with labour's brown; abundant hair,
Bright as the first beam of the dawning day
And then such eyes!—a hazel dazzling pair,
Which shoot into the soul a flashing thought
Of—of—one knows not (at least says not) what.

—'That parenthesis,' I said, 'is a saving clause; for not only you, but *I*, know full intimately 'of what' your 'flashing thoughts,' as you call them, are. I wanted to say a word to you about this fair damsel who keeps you poetizing at one o'clock in the morning. What made you so very fabulous in your apologies for our being late for dinner? If you had not stopped my mouth, I was going to give a full and particular account of the cottage, and the garden, and the Cheshire cheese, and the foaming ale,—ending with a description and eulogy of Mademoiselle Susan's beauty, which would have found, I think, more favour with the male than the female part of my auditory. Now, mine honest friend, by your being so wholly silent on so very interesting a topic, I can't help suspecting that you have deeper intentions in that quarter than I gave you credit, or rather discredit, for. Come, come, Dallas, just think for a moment what you are about. You know I am the farthest in the world from being prudish or straight-laced—but really the less you go near that cottage the better. You can but bring unhappiness on an innocent and very lovely

creature, not to speak of her father and friends. If you only flirt with the girl, you are, to say the very least, unsettling her mind, rendering her unfit for her future lot in life, and that lot distasteful to her;—besides tampering with her feelings and affections merely to gratify what is, under your favour, a very miserable vanity, and must be necessarily a most transient one. If, as it would probably end, to use the homely phrase 'you did worse,' I need not say what ruin and wretchedness you would bring on her and hers.'—D. assured me I was regarding the matter far too seriously, and promised me to prosecute it no farther. I hope he will not—but I can't help wishing that 'the cottage near the wood' was a few miles farther off. I wanted him, in order to put the whole thing out of his head, to accompany me to-morrow;—but he says he cannot leave home at this time,—as his father expects some friends whom it is necessary he should be here to meet."

The following was written, as will be seen by the date, nearly three years afterwards.

"*London, June* 16, 1795.

"I dined yesterday with Dallas at his villa near Richmond. I had not before seen him since my return from abroad. I arrived about an hour before dinner. D. received me most cordially,—when, indeed, did he ever otherwise? He took me round the gardens, which are exceedingly beautifully situated, and kept in the highest order. They stretch down to the river, with smooth-shaven turf, and parterres of the most rare and rich flowers. I made some observation on the peculiar beauty of these last. 'Yes,' he said, 'an old acquaintance of yours, whom you will see by-and-bye, takes great pleasure and interest in flowers, and is fond of collecting them.'—As I looked round on the scarcest and most expensive exotics which met the eye on every side, I thought of the little cabbage-garden, with a couple of rose bushes for its decoration;—but I said nothing.

"When we entered the house (which D. has bought since his father's death) I could not help being struck with the admirable taste which reigned through every part of it. I have always thought

these villas to smack more of *luxury* than any other description of dwelling. In themselves evidently superfluities—(for those who can afford to have them at all, are nearly always lords of country halls and town mansions)—they are commonly fitted up with a mixture of elegance and voluptuous richness which we seldom find so exquisitely blended elsewhere. Their size prevents the ideas of grandeur or formal stateliness—and adds, perhaps, to the luxurious (I must repeat the word) feeling of indulgence and ease. The circumstance, also, of its being nearly always, (it ought to be *quite* always)—summer when we go to them—is another enhancement of their beauties,—to say nothing of its being hot, black, smoky, *brick-built* London from which we come to their bright fresh stream, and breathing verdure. Dallas's may be considered an epitome of the species. The clear sparkling water gives life,—the high thick trees give shade,—and the clustering flowers, a varied but undistinguishable condensation of every sweet scent,—to this exquisite spot. The rooms are fitted up with all the usual luxury, and far more than the usual taste,

of a *petite maison*. Every thing is appropriate to the style and size of the place—nothing is gaudy, nothing is too grand. Costly, to be sure, most things must have been; but costliness is the last idea which occurs to you;—all seems calculated to woo the senses, and to win them without wooing long.

"Three more friends of D.'s arrived one by one; and at last Susan came in. She is a very different person from when I saw her last. She was then a beautiful girl—she is now an exceedingly fine woman. She is, or seems to be, a little taller; her form is more fully developed, and her carriage freer and more under self-command. But, indeed, if I had met her any where else, I might have been introduced to her as to Lady This, or Mrs. T'other,—and never dreamed of the pretty, modest, country girl whom I admired three years ago. Not that I at all mean to say that there is the least *im*modesty in her manner or air—not the slightest;—but she is totally uncountryfied—she has nothing left of that touch of the romantic in her appearance which she had when I last saw her. One might have chosen her then

for the heroine of a romance, or of a pretty, soft, gentle, tale, such as —— —— would write, and ladies and lady-like gentlemen admire. But now she is very different. Dallas has spent a great deal of money, and taken infinite pains, for her education and improvement. Her manners are unconstrained and good; and her whole appearance in no way distinguishable from that of nine women out of ten whom you meet at a rout, except perhaps by a very suspicious superiority of beauty to almost every one of them.

"She sat at the head of the table at dinner; and did the honours as if she had never been accustomed to an humbler board, or simpler fare. I drank champagne with her—and thought of the bright frothing ale I had last pledged her in!—She was addressed as Mrs. Williams—an appellation concocted, I believe, from D.'s christian name;—and the guests, with the good taste and good feeling which I have more than once seen exercised on such occasions, paid her perhaps more delicate and respectful attention than if she had been possessed of all the immunities and honours of the place she

occupied. Her own manners were, I have said, remarkably good—equally free from stiff and sensitive reserve on the one hand, and any thing approaching to levity on the other. Still there is always *something*—a certain conscious glance of the eye, if no more,—from which I have never seen any one placed in her unhappy situation totally free. I thought in particular that she did not feel quite easy when Dallas talked to me about going down to Kipplestone, in the autumn, to shoot.

"In the evening she sang—pleasingly enough, but to my mind not half so much so as when I heard her upon the bench at her cottage door. She accompanied herself by striking a few notes upon a splendid guitar, which was hung round her neck by a sky-blue scarf,—but it had not, in my eyes, half the effect of the work and the needle which had occupied her hands then. She looked very beautiful certainly—for few things are more becoming to a woman than this—and if I had never seen her before I should have been much struck with her;—but there was something which appeared to me unreal and exotic in the whole business, as compared with

the simple and natural peasant whom I remembered. I muttered to myself, in the words of the ballad—

> The lady she is gay and grand,
> The lady is fair and young—
> She strikes the harp with a skilful hand,
> And she sings with a tutored tongue.
>
> But the maiden is [was] younger and fairer still,
> And her lay, in its simple art,
> Sheds o'er the senses a gentle thrill,
> And sinks, thro' them, to the heart.

"The real difference is just this. To hear a country girl at a cottage-door, sing with taste, feeling, and delicacy, as well as with a sweet voice, is something more than we expect from her station and appearance;—there is a pleasing discrepancy between the singer, and the song—an agreeable contrast between what we look for and what we find. But a fine lady singing equally well, or something better, in a fine drawing-room, and accompanied on a fine instrument, is quite common and in course; and as such excites no peculiar sensation or gratification whatever.

"As to Dallas, I am glad, and I am not glad, that he seems still quite taken up with her. I am not

glad, as it will lead to a continuance of this entanglement, which estranges him from his friends, and from the duties which every man with his advantages owes to himself. But, on the other hand, if he were to feel otherwise, it would cause him bitter struggles and unavailing regrets, to say nothing of what it would inflict upon one whom he has wronged too much already."

Towards the end of the journal, I lighted upon the following. With reference to what has gone before, it speaks for itself;—but it also speaks that warmth and generosity of feeling, which I have stated to have belonged to my poor brother in so strong a degree,—and which he here displays with that unconsciousness of their not being quite a matter of course, which so often attends and betokens them.

"*London, Feb.* 2, 1800.

"I was, last night, at the play, and when I came out I found it was raining heavily. As is usual on wet nights, it was impossible to get a coach. The coachmen of London are, in truth, swallow-like

friends—they crowd round you when the sun shines, and you don't want them; and are absent or repulsive when it rains and you are in need of their aid. And so it was in my case, last night;—for, after losing as much time, and getting very nearly as wet, as I should have done in going home,—I was at last obliged to make the best of a bad business, and set off in the midst of the rain.

"It was an exceedingly bad night, and I had no umbrella,—so I naturally hurried on as fast as I could. It was that unremitting, steady, soaking rain, which, though less heavy than the pelting of a storm shower, takes very little more time to wet you through,—and affords no prospect or hope of cessation. The streets of London wear a peculiar and very desolate aspect on such a night as this, after ten or eleven o'clock. During the earlier part of the evening, there is always a certain, and that a considerable, number of passengers in the streets, let the weather be what it may. I do believe that nothing short of an earthquake would keep a London tradesman or mechanic at home, if his business called him abroad. But, as the night advances, such pas-

sengers become fewer and fewer; and, at last, cease altogether. Their quick active step—their gliding and purpose-like motion—disappear from the scene, and are replaced by figures of a very different description. By the time the theatres close, on a night such as last night, all have sought shelter who have any shelter to seek;—none remain except the shivering, starving beggar, and those of a calling more abject and melancholy still. The effect of this worse than deserted state of the streets is rendered stronger by its contrast with the reflection of the lamps upon their wet and shining surface,—and the quick and diamond-like sparkles occasioned by the plash of the raindrops as they fall and break. There is thus, at once, presented to the eye, an appearance of brilliancy and light—of squalidness and desolation.

"When I got to the entrance of St. Martin's-court —(where there is an arch-way which gives a few yards' shelter) there was, as usual, a knot collected of those abject and miserable beings to whom I have already alluded. The line of 'the courts,' as it is called, being the great footway thoroughfare be-

tween the eastern and western parts of London, is always much infested at night by creatures of this wretched class. There is nothing which to a man of the least feeling (even putting delicacy out of the question) is so painful and revolting as the sight of these unfortunates. When he recollects *what* has been the original cause of *such* a termination, he shudders and turns aside. But there are circumstances which add an increased appearance, at least, of misery, even to these most miserable of all human objects. Severity of weather is one of the chief of these. To behold a wretch, soaked and dripping with rain and kennel-mud, and shivering with the worst of cold, that arising from wet—to behold a wretch like this, assume the manners, aspect, and tone, of levity and sensual excitement, is a contrast almost too shocking for our eyes and hearts to look and think upon.

" As I pursued my way homeward, I met several of these unhappy creatures coming out of the door of a spirit-shop in one of the courts. They were shouting and laughing, with the scream-like laugh of drunken recklessness and desperation. The fore-

most of the group, who seemed the loudest and wildest of them all, seized the skirt of my coat, as I was passing, and exclaimed in the common phrase, and sickening accent, of her class—' Take me along with you.' I drew my coat from her hold, and walked on rapidly; but she followed me, calling out from time to time in the language of coarse and hardened vice. After I had got some way, she caught hold of me a second time, and I had some difficulty in shaking her off. I saw that she was drunk, which added to her boldness, and defiance of the consequences and control which such people usually hold in dread. When I again proceeded, she again followed—saying " Ah, I know you, I know you very well—and you know me, too, though you won't own me now;—you were glad enough to do so once!"—I took no notice of this, as it is one of their common exclamations;—till, at last, she said, ' Yes, yes, I know you very well,—*Major Earle!*' I stopped short at once, in extreme surprise. I had no idea how such a person could have become possessed of my name, and, of course, had very little pleasure in the discovery. I stopped and turned round to look

at her. She now attempted to run off, but I seized her by the arm, determined to be satisfied as to who she was, and how she came to know me. We were now in Leicester-square,—and I drew her under one of the lamps,—but she hung her head down forcibly upon her breast, and pulled her bonnet over her eyes. 'Who are you?' I asked,—'and how upon earth come you to know my name?' She was silent—I repeated my question once or twice—still no answer.—'Who are you?' I said again—'I am determined to know who you are, and how you know who I am, before I let go my hold—who are you?'—I felt he rtremble under my hand, as in a voice which proved she was completely sobered at once, she at last said, but still without looking up—'It is no wonder you don't remember me, Major Earle; who, indeed, could?—and yet you knew me well once.'—I still had no idea who it was that spoke to me.—She continued in a yet lower and more broken tone—'Though Dallas is dead, surely you have not forgotten him!'

"Never, no never, in my life, did I experience a more violent and sickening shock. Gracious heaven!

and *this* was the creature whom I remembered in her young purity and loveliness—whom I had so often seen surrounded with all that luxury and wealth could furnish for her pleasure—at whose table, as I may call it, I had so often sat in the midst of troops of admiring and flattering friends—whom I had left, not four years since, the adored, almost the idolized, object of affection to a man who was one of the most feeling, generous, and noble of created beings!

"I had striven, since my last return from abroad, to obtain some tidings of poor, poor Susan; but in vain. Dallas's death was so sudden that he left no will—so she sank at once from splendid wealth to absolute destitution;—for his friends (no—his *relations*) would do nothing for one on whom they had always looked with dislike and fear. Would, oh would to God! that I had been here.—She who had been dear to Dallas should not have been treated thus.

"All this passed across my mind in one instant,—as the poor wretch raised her face to the light, as she spoke. Heavens! what a face it was!—her eyes were bleared and red at the edges, and the balls

were glazed with recent drunkenness. She had, it is true, recovered her senses; but her eye still reeled, and her breath still reeked, with the effects of that poisonous debauchery. If there be, in the human shape, one object more revolting, degrading, and humiliating than another, it is that of a *drunken woman!*—and it was now presented to my eyes in the person of one whom I had known in all the delicacy of female youth—who had been the first and only love of my first and best friend. Her cheek was fallen and hollowed,—and an unwholesome, sodden, paleness, which overspread the lower part of it, was made almost hideous by the contrast of a large blotch of coarse red paint which was plastered upon each cheek bone. Of her figure I could see nothing,—for she was wrapped to the throat in a large shawl which fell over nearly her whole person, in folds in which grease, dirt, and dripping wet seemed to struggle for supremacy. I never beheld a more pitiable being!

"She was so much agitated by the sudden revulsion, both physical and mental, which she had undergone, that for some time I thought she would

have fallen upon the pavement where we stood. She spoke with an agony almost amounting to incoherence, of what she had gone through—of her present condition. She told me that she was reduced to the lowest pitch of distress,—that, (and I fully believe it to be true) she had not for the last six and thirty hours tasted any thing *but gin!* Good God! and this is the state to which we reduce those who lavish upon us their whole affection —who place in us their whole trust!

"It was some time before I could at all compose her; and then she wanted me to leave her to her fate—"to die," as she said, sinking upon a door-stone—"to die *here!*"—At last, after considerable delay and difficulty, I procured a coach, and had her conveyed to my house. I instantly sent for medical aid, and had a bed prepared for her. Mr. S. said that she had undergone so much, and was in so debilitated a condition of frame, that he could not yet say what hopes he could hold out of her ultimate recovery. This morning, I have had her removed to a lodging close to Mr. S.'s—who is

really kind and active, as well as skilful. Poor, poor, creature!

"It is not ten years since I saw this woman, beautiful, innocent, and happy—and, if it had not been for an almost incalculable chance, she would last night have perished in the streets!"

February 20.

"S. has just been with me to inform me of poor Susan's death."

* * * * * *

FRAGMENT VIII.

* * * * * *

BEFORE we went to a public school, we were at a small one, about ten miles from Wilverham. It was kept by a clergyman; and consisted of about thirty boys, chiefly, like ourselves, the sons of the gentlemen of the neighbourhood. I was not long in the country before I determined to ride over and see my old school and my old master; who, I was told was still alive, though he had some years before given up the school to his son.

How familiar was every step of the road! My brother and I were always sent for on Saturday, and returned on the Monday morning;—and how well I recollect our different feelings, and our different pace, according to the direction in which our ponies' heads were turned. I could still see myself flying along on my little forester [grey, with a long tail], on our Saturday's journey, and trailing back at a foot's-pace on

the morning of black Monday. Justly, indeed, may it be called so;—for I question if (setting periods of violent grief aside) there be any thing in after-life more truly gloomy and wretched than the feelings of a boy as he goes back to school. I have always thought it mere affectation, or, at all events, quite a fallacy, to talk of our school days as the happiest of our lives. In happiness, what we believe to be, *is*. If we fancy ourselves happy or unhappy, we are so. And where was ever the schoolboy who *thought* himself happy at school? In the first place, he has always an insatiable craving for manhood, quite incompatible with strong present enjoyment;—and moreover, a school-life, in nearly every other respect, is any thing rather than a state of happiness. The contrast between the luxuries, the kindnesses, and the *heart* of home, and the discipline, the privations, the scoffing, the utter want of all softness and delicacy of feeling, which are inevitable to a school—this contrast neither is nor ought to be, undergone without strong sensations of depression and pain. I say it ought not, for it is eminently calculated to check and deaden

those feelings which should be cherished the most—and which are, at the same time, the most obnoxious to the subsequent influences of the world, and the most susceptible of their pernicious action. Almost in proportion as a feeling is tender and amiable, it is converted into a torment by the jeers and sarcasm to which it is subjected. For example, every one who has been at an English school, must remember the ridicule which invariably awaited any manifestation of his affection for his mother or his sisters, in particular. For my own part, I would rather, like Ford, have trusted a thief to walk my favourite horse, than any of my schoolfellows with one of my mother's letters, or even with *my sister's Christian name.* I have said that the transition from home to school never *is* experienced without pain;—for how can any boy of the slightest sensibility of heart not feel bitterly the contrast between the manner in which he is loved and *considered* in the one, and the contemptuous recklessness, or at best, the coarse hard friendship, he meets with in the other? I recollect (so strong was this feeling in me), that whenever we were sent to school in the carriage, as

was the case in bad weather, I used always, for the first half of our journey, to long for it to break down, that we might be obliged to return home again; and to lament when our near approach to school rendered even the wish of an upset unavailing. One day, I remember to have met the footman of an old lady who lived in our neighbourhood, and wishing to be him, *because he was not going to school.* I was struck with a very similar expression of the same feeling, carried a little farther, in a clever and entertaining book, published some years back, in which the hero, upon leaving home (where, by the way, he was in love) for a considerable period, wishes to be one of the turkeys which he sees feeding near the park gate*. When he returns, however, about two years after, he reflects that it is well he was not taken at his word, as the turkeys were probably by that time all killed and eaten;—and, in like manner, when I came home for the holidays, and old Mrs. G——'s servant came to our house behind her carriage, I was well contented that I had not transmigrated into his form.

* "Thinks I to Myself."

But, in despite of the strong dislike which we all have of school while we are there,—it is very certain that it leaves a feeling of kindliness, almost of affection, towards the place which we used to detest so much, and even towards the master, whom we loved little, if at all, better. S——, where we were at school, is a place of great picturesque beauty, and is noted as such in the country round. The church, which has a graceful and lofty spire, is of great antiquity, and completely covered with ivy; and, just beyond the wall of the churchyard, stretches a very extensive pool of water, which, being bordered by tall and leafy trees, gives a character both of peculiarity and beauty to the whole village. The parsonage, which is also the school, is a house of old stone, with three gables in front, and a large pear-tree trained over the whole surface on that side. And yet, pretty and even beautiful as the village was, we not only none of us ever thought it so, but we even wondered how it was possible that it could be so considered by others. I remember, in particular, once casually meeting with a 'View of S—— Church,' in a set of prints taken from the drawings

of some picturesque tourist;—and being amazed how any body could be so blind as to single out such a place for admiration.

How widely different were my feelings as I approached it now. It was in the middle of autumn, and the rich colouring of that season was spread over its abundant trees. The little lake was rippled by the brisk wind, and looked bright and glittering in the sunshine. When I came within a few hundred yards of the house, I pulled up my horse, and stopped to look around. In the agricultural parts of the country, these quiet villages of husbandmen remain unchanged and unincreased for ages. The labours of the village-mason are confined to keeping the old dwellings in repair,—the erection of a new one is a thing unthought of. It was thus that this place was accurately the same as when I last saw it. There was the shop where we used to buy our cakes and *allicumpane*, with its half-hatch door, and some of its dainties displayed in the window, just as of old. It was, in my time, kept by an old widow, who was famous for the neatness of her dress, especially the accurate plaiting of her snow-

white cap—and for the admirable eel-pies which she used to make on a Saturday, during the season. The shop looked just the same as ever,—but there was no possibility of her being alive, unless she had been a second Countess of Desmond,—for she was above seventy when I left school. A little farther on, to the right, was the green, where we used to go and play cricket on a half-holiday—(at common times we were confined to the play-ground);—and straight before me was the blacksmith's, which used to be the rendezvous of all the knowing-ones of the village,—to steal out to mix with whom had always been esteemed particularly *the thing* by the boys. It is almost invariable in England for a school-boy to be a bit of a jockey—at least to have a fondness for horses, and to fancy that he knows something about them. It was at the smithy we indulged this taste, as the smith was a farrier also—and horses, horse-dealers, horse-*men* of all kinds were wont to come thither. Perhaps we did not enjoy it the less, from the place being strictly forbidden.

These recollections all seem quite childish when

they are put upon paper—but they are *real*;—they touched my heart at the time, and I now tell of their having done so. It is strange, indeed, how vivid the remembrances of childhood are, while events which have occurred in more recent life have faded entirely from the mind. The first impressions are, in this case, indisputably the deepest and most lasting.

I had written the Doctor word of my coming, so he expected me when I arrived at the house. When I had left this school, more than thirty years before, he was a hearty and portly man, of about five-and-forty—with a person a little inclined to be round, and a nose a good deal inclining to be red, and a periodical touch of the gout every autumn. He had always, without being a drunkard, been fond of his bottle;—and had a lingering taste for the chase, as was evinced by his giving us a holiday whenever the hounds met near the village, and his mounting his grey horse (which was fast becoming white) and going to see them throw off, and as much farther as he and his steed could compass. He was, as a schoolmaster usually is,

exceedingly fond of his joke, and used sometimes to accompany the flagellations, which were by no means infrequent, by jests which did not in the least increase the very small desire to laugh which the sufferer might at the moment be supposed to entertain. In short, the Doctor was one of those good-humoured and somewhat self-indulgent persons, who, without exciting any strong sentiment of respect or esteem, seldom fail to leave one of kindliness—the livelier, perhaps, for the very absence of the other feelings I have named.

I found the Doctor seated in his ample easy chair by the fire-side, with his legs up on a softly-stuffed stool, and his crutches lying beside him—quite a martyr to the gout. As Falstaff says, his had been "a decreasing leg, and an increasing belly," since I had last seen him;—he was now unwieldy in bulk, and feeble in limb. His rotund visage had become flabby and fallen; and the red tint of his nose had deepened into a confirmed purple. He had on the *fac-simile* of the large full wig, at which I had so often trembled. This had evidently been newly powdered in expectation

of my visit; which, as well as the smallness of the quantity of snuff on the neck-cloth and frill, proved that his toilet had been lately made.

He stretched out his hand to me with much heartiness, and apologized for not rising to receive me, with a diatribe against his old enemy for keeping him tied by the leg. He looked on me, I perceived, with some surprise—for he scarcely expected, from my age, to have seen a man so broken. He contented himself, however, with a stock joke or two about rupees, pagodas, and the liver—curries, cayenne, and Particular Madeira. He then returned to the days when my brother and I were at his school, and spoke with a flash of real feeling of the changes in our family since. "Ah! Mr. Earle," said he, "for I suppose I must no longer call you, Gilbert,—times are sadly changed since then. Your father, Sir, is almost the only one of my contemporaries who remains,—and he, I am told, is in a very bad state. The neighbourhood is all new to me now;—except those who were under me here, I know none of them. And even many of my scholars have gone before me—Your

brother, Sir!—Alas! who would have thought I should outlive so fine a young man as that—but he was a soldier, and a bullet knows no respect of persons—it hits the young and strong as readily as the old and feeble. He was indeed a fine, gallant young man, the colonel—and he fell, like one, in the field of honour. Alas! I talk of him as a young man, but I suppose his sons must be nearly grown up now." I answered, they were at college. "Think of that," he replied—"and I remember their father not this high! And you, Mr. Gilbert, are a good deal changed since I first saw you in this parlour;—but that was not yesterday; and, besides, you have been a long time in a hot climate—

"—— sub curru nimium propinqui
Solis ——————"

as our friend Horace says—and no man can do that without feeling it. One would scarcely think, to look at us, that I was your father's senior at the university. I believe, after all, the gout is a friend as well as a foe—he is a disagreeable guest enough, to be sure, but I often think that he keeps worse ones away." A sudden and violent twinge seemed

to make the Doctor doubt his hypothesis, almost before it was laid down.

I now begged to see the school;—the old man apologized for not being able to accompany me,—but he rang the bell and desired the servant to request Mr. ——, (his son,) to come to him. Accordingly, a spruce, prim, stiff personage made his appearance, dressed in a scrupulous suit of black, rather worn at the elbows, but exceedingly well brushed and orthodox. I remembered him a tall gawky lad, a sort of half-assistant to his father, and especially hated by the boys, from his being in turn associate and petty tyrant,—play-fellow and, as it was suspected, spy.

After we had been somewhat ceremoniously presented to each other, and a few words of recognition had passed,—he preceded me to the school, which is a detached building, at the other side of the yard. As we approached, I heard that indescribable hum which always proceeds from a full school—but when we entered, it ceased suddenly, as every head was raised from the book, to look at 'the strange gentleman.' The school was

almost unchanged;—the very forms had a physiognomy so similar to those on which I had sat—blotted with ink, and scrawled and carved with initials and nondescript figures of all kinds—that my imagination might well be allowed to believe them the same. The *lockers* (as our phrase was,) were indisputably the same;—there was a multitude of indescribable marks and tokens on them which flashed upon my recollection in an instant. The chief difference was in the costume of the boys. The fashions of dress are fundamentally altered since I was at school. The shoe-buckle, the knee-breeches, the long hair, which formed the dandyism of that day, are quite vanished—and though the present mode is far more natural and graceful, yet at that moment it seemed to me in disagreeable contrast with the old locality.

While I was contemplating these things, I had forgotten the usual boon which it is always expected that a visitor should beg—a half-holiday. I was reminded of it, by observing a pretty general whispering among the boys, together with side-long glances at me, which seemed to intimate an anxiety

lest I should not be sufficiently aware of the honoured custom. I immediately turned to Mr. ——, and made my request aloud. Every eye in the room flashed with delight,—and one or two of the most eager boys half sprang from their seats in anticipation. The master paused and looked important, and began to demur;—but I insisted that, *for auld lang syne*, he should not deny me, —and at last he yielded, with that bad grace with which schoolmasters generally seem to think it necessary to qualify the granting of a favour. The moment the word was given, there was a general rush by the boys,—and a most vociferous shouting of " Thank-ye, Sir!—Thank-ye, Sir!" Each sprang to his locker to put by his book—(a piece of [regularity to which the presence of the master seemed to me to have a great deal to say,) and in two minutes the school was cleared.

I now looked round me more attentively, and the existence of other days seemed indeed recalled. My formal friend by my side, was, it is true, but a poor substitute for my jolly and rubicund old master; but still he was what the painters call ' in

good keeping' with the place. He did not seem to enter very strongly into my feelings, or even quite to understand the eagerness of my exclamations—as, one by one, I recognised several objects of old remembrance. The *birch*, that formidable weapon of scholastic warfare, was still kept in precisely the same place, as when I used to cast a timid glance at it on a cold winter's morning, when I had neglected to learn my *lines* (repetition lesson) over night. That place was one especially adapted to the purpose,—being a cupboard of open wire work, so that the rods were kept in view, *in terrorem*, and yet were out of reach, that the sentenced culprits might not pick the buds off them, which, as every schoolboy well knows, causes their strokes to be less severe. The slates hung round the room on the hat-pegs, just as of old; and, as of old also, I saw on several of them, many figures besides those of arithmetic;—sundry sketches of the master, and games of Fox and Geese, *&c.*, cut permanently in with a knife. I went to the locker which had been mine for the greater part of the time I was at school, but I

found it fastened. Mr. ——, however, sent for the boy to whom it belonged. He was a fine open-faced little fellow about eleven years old; and seemed pleased and gratified at having the good chance of being singled out from his fellows; as schoolboys always are, let it be on what account it may. When I had explained to him what I wanted, he exclaimed—"What! Sir, were you at school here?" and cast upon me an involuntary glance, which seemed to add, "Surely it must have been before the deluge!" He opened the locker, and in truth I could fancy it my own. A new Virgil at the top shewed the exact stage of progress of my little friend,—and then came books of all sizes, and of all degrees of dogs'-ears and thumbing,—marbles, balls, whips, and even a bat, all jumbled together in admirable confusion. Mr. —— thought it incumbent upon him to reprimand the boy for the "untidy" state of his treasures; and stigmatized the intrusion of the bat with some vehemence. I recollected that the boy who had had this locker before me was destined to be a sailor, (he was now at the top of the list of post

captains,) and had carved a ship upon the inside of the lid. This lid consisted of two boards, one of which had been renewed; but there was still to be seen the sternmost half of the vessel, with an immense ensign flying, on which, below the Union, he had cut his name, and the date of the year—"THOMAS BREE, 1783."—The jingle thus produced had always been familiar to my ear, from the time of its being originally carved. It had struck me as ludicrous; and I used to go singing it up and down after Bree, till he grew wearied out, and thrashed me for it. But still it had always remained, even up to this time, like one of those snatches of song or of eloquence which we have been accustomed to repeat in childhood, and which we can never get out of our heads afterwards. Here it was again!

We next went up to the bed-rooms,—for I wished to see my old one. The bed which I had occupied stood in the same corner, with its white curtains looped up, tent fashion. Here I had slept for three years, from the time I was nine till I was twelve years old. How light was my rest

then!—how light was my heart! I had even more than the usual salt of youth in me,—I was more gladsome even than my gladsome fellows,—and when I laid my head upon that innocent pillow, how little could I guess of the nights of sorrow, and despair, and anguish which it would be my lot in after years to pass! The contrast of guilt and purity,—of unhappiness and joy,—is always more vividly strong when connected with the place of our rest. During the day, the thousand avocations of business and society, to a certain extent, make in these respects, all men for the time equal. But when we retire to the solitude of our chamber, and the silence of the night, then is it that the heart, no longer aided by external circumstance, re-assumes its real nature, more especially if that nature be one of sorrow. How commonly is the phrase 'the pillow,' used for those hours of darkness, when the spirit communes with itself—when our thoughts enter into our own hearts with all the power of searching truth! The sleep of a sinless child, and that of youthful innocence, have been themes to almost all poets, in almost all ages;—and why is the contemplation of

purity in this state so delightful to them, but from the pain and terrors of its contrast? The pillow of the fallen and remorseful man has, indeed, to him no softness. The heavy sigh is then unrestrained, the hot tear is then unchecked,—and the heart heaves in unmitigated bitterness. It may be thought by some that I exaggerate the picture —Happy are those who *can* think so!

My feelings crowded thick upon me as I gazed on this well-remembered room, and I turned hastily away, that my companion might not perceive them. We descended to the play-ground. By this time the boys had arranged their sports for the evening —some were at fives, and some at football.

"'Twas here, we shot the marble through the ring—"

and here they were playing now. I used to be very fond of this game;—though I hope I never was "a dunce at syntax," I certainly was "a dab at taw."—I had always a magnificent collection of *alleys*, of which I was as proud as Lord Stafford, or Mr. Angerstein can be of their pictures; and I was glad to see that the taste had not passed away from the school. I found my friend of the locker

just beginning a game,—and I had some conversation with him on the subject, in which he was surprised to find me so well-skilled. As I talked with the boy, I looked back to the time when I was just such another; and I thought how little it could have been foretold what my after-fate would be. I have often reflected on this when I have been surrounded with young people. Lift the veil, I have said, from before a few (in some cases a very few) years, and what traces will you find of the gaiety and young-heartedness which we see now? One will be shattered in spirit, and another in frame;—how few will there be who will not, from their contrast with the present state, make our "sorrow take new sadness from surprise." Nothing can be more true to nature than the fine passage from which I quote this line; it has always remained green in my memory, because it has gone to my heart:

> "Minutely trace man's life; year after year,
> Through all his days let all his deeds appear,
> And then, though some may in that life be strange,
> Yet there appears no vast nor sudden change;

The links that bind those various deeds are seen,
And no mysterious void is left between.
But let these binding links be all destroyed,
All that through years he suffered or enjoyed:
Let that vast gap be made, and then behold—
This was the youth, and he is thus when old;
Then we at once the work of time survey,
And in an instant see a life's decay;
Pain mix'd with pity in our bosoms rise,
And *sorrow takes new sadness from surprise**."

It is exactly this feeling which has been so bitter to me since my return home. If I had passed the years of my absence here, the changes would have been gradual, and I should have changed with them—but now, both in myself, and in what I see around me, the alteration flashes upon me at once, sudden as well as complete. Who could have thought who had seen me when I was the age of the child with whom I was conversing—who could have thought what I should be *now?*

I believe the softening of my heart, as I spoke with the boy, increased considerably the *tip* which it was necessary for me to give him.

As I rode home, I pursued the same train of

* "The Parting Hour."

reflection,—and I found myself more than once repeating aloud,

" *This* was the youth, and he is *thus* when old—"

Alas! alas! when was ever the line so applicable?

* * * * * *

FRAGMENT IX.

* * * * * *

* * * But what right have I to cite with murmuring and sadness the changes and losses, which a quarter of a century has produced,—when I thus saw how much a tenth part of that period can effect? The work of Time, during the long, long years I had been away, was as nothing when compared with this.—But I must not anticipate;—*Voiçi le fait.*

A few years before I left India, a young man had brought to me some very strong letters of recommendation from some of my connections in England, whom I was most happy and desirous to oblige. He had, in consequence, remained some time under my roof; during which period, his fine disposition and talents, his amiable heart, and his winning fascination of manner, had created between us a friendship very unlike any thing which usually exists between men of such different ages as we

were. He was above twenty years my junior,—and yet our *liaison* was more like that of contemporaries than of two men of separate generations. This may be considered the more strange on account of the habits and temperament which I have described as being mine, from so very early a period of my life—and I at first thought it so myself. But I found that the buoyant animation and liveliness of my young friend were of the greatest benefit to me; and, while they gave relief to the usual gloomy condition of my spirits and demeanour, they concurrently diminished its unpleasantness to himself. On the other hand, I had made a point of exerting myself to render my house agreeable to him at first, —and, afterwards, he equally strove to prevent my relapsing into my usual state. To effect this, he so modified his youthful feelings and manner, as to enliven without shocking the mind of a melancholy man. If he had been less delicate, considerate, and (intuitively) skilful,—he probably would have produced diametrically the contrary effect from that which it was his endeavour to work. But, as it was, during the time he was with me, I certainly

was better at ease than I had been for years;—and when we parted, it was, as I have mentioned, with sentiments of friendship very unusual to arise between two men in every point so dissimilar. The very difference, however, of our ages, was, I suspect, rather of advantage than detriment to the feelings with which L—— regarded me. I had more and better influence over him than a man of his own standing could ever have acquired—while there was none of the constraint and awkwardness which young people usually experience in any very constant intercourse with companions more advanced in life.

It certainly would not be imagined, from what I have said, that this young man could have any connexion with the disappointments and pain which attended my return to England—but so it was. About a year and a half before I finally quitted India, he was about to be married to a young and charming person, to whom he was attached with all the characteristic ardour of his disposition,—and who, from the little I saw of her, appeared equally to deserve and to repay his affection. I

was to have been present at their marriage;—but, alas! a few days before that on which it was to take place, the poor girl was carried off by one of those violent and rapid diseases which are, in that country, so common. In tropical climates too, decomposition follows death so speedily, that interment is necessarily almost immediate. She was accordingly to be buried the morning after her decease; and I went to assist and support L—— during the ceremony, at which, in despite of all I could urge, he insisted on being present.

I found him in the room with the corpse. He was sitting beside it when I entered; but the moment he beheld me, he ran towards me, fell upon my neck, and wept—for the first time since the catastrophe had happened. He wept very long; but at last he seemed, in some degree, relieved;—and, raising himself, he took me by the hand, and led me to the coffin.

The freshness of life had passed away—but even now she was surpassingly beautiful. Cold, marble-pale, and rigid, she looked like one of the beautiful sculptures which are placed upon old tombs, in

effigy of those who sleep below. The face alone was uncovered—long grave-clothes closely enveloped the whole frame to the neck—and a napkin was over her brow. So smooth and softly white was the flesh, that it could scarcely be distinguished where the one ended, and the other began. From beneath this, however, one long tress of hair escaped, which, passing across the cheek, rested upon the shroud. This struck me more than all,—for this gave the contrast of life with the perfect deadliness of all else. So still in the stillness of peace,—so calm in the calmness of purity,—was this corpse of loveliness and virtue, that one scarce could think that the King of Terrors had claimed it for his own. It looked, as I have said, more like the figure on a pale sarcophagus—or perhaps, more like one in a deep, a very deep sleep—than the soulless wreck of passed humanity. But this one tress of bright hair, shining on the white skin—like a fling of golden sunlight upon snow—recalled the terrible truth at once. The hair is the latest portion of the human frame to betray the consequence of death. While the eyes become glazed, and the nerves fixed, and

the flesh grows colourless and icy cold,—the hair is the same that it was when it added so much beauty to beautiful life—when it waved in the wind, or gleamed in the sun, as the quick motion of youth might influence.

Yes, she was, indeed, lovely !—and what was this loveliness now ?—almost already touched by that decay from which, though we know it to be invariable, our nature causes us to shrink so sickeningly ! Sad, indeed, is it to gaze upon a face we love, beaming in all the brightness of beautiful youth, and to reflect that that flesh will moulder, and finally become dust,—that those eyes will cease to be, and nothing remain but an hideous and revolting *bone*, undistinguishable from that which formed the head of the coarsest or most brutal. What then, must it be to look upon a countenance thus beautiful, and thus loved, when this terrible and disgusting process has nearly begun ?—but this is a part of the subject too horrid to be dwelled upon.

There is, however, another idea, which has always risen within me, with a revolted feeling, when I have gazed on one thus about to be placed in the

grave. I mean all the preparation (I might almost say decoration) which the senseless clay has undergone, to be laid to its fellow-earth. Why that livery of death—that uniform of the grave, in which all are equally wrapped? The Ruling Passion even of Narcissa is not strong *after* death;—we then, surely, need no adornment. The dress in which we chanced to be habited when the spirit passed, might, one would think, suffice to decorate the physical body which is left behind. But this coffin, into which I looked, was, besides all this, quilted throughout with satin; and a pillow of the same material supported the head, as if the fair cheek could now taste its softness! Alas, alas, how paltry do these mockeries appear to us at such a moment!

I had ample time to gaze my fill, and to think of all these things, and many more;—for L—— placed himself at the head of the coffin, and remained there, with his head bowed in his hands upon its edge. Low deep groans struggled from him at intervals—and the cold sweat was clammy on his brow. At length they came to fasten down the coffin. I wanted

him to go with me from the room,—but the paroxysms of his despair were so terrible, when I strove to draw him towards the door, that I thought it better to desist.—He flung himself upon the body, and fastened his lips upon hers—now so damp and rigid.—There he lay, as if he would have lain for ever;—at last, I gently raised him up, and signed to the men to replace the lid.—They did so at once. L—— gazed at them as if he had been changed to stone;—but when he heard the grinding sound of the first screw, as it was driven down into the wood, he uttered a loud and terrible shriek, and fell senseless into my arms.

I was afterwards glad that it was so—for all was over before he came to himself. It was, indeed, several days before he left his bed. After a short time I took him to my own house,—where he staid nearly three months, recovering very slowly. At the end of that period, he returned to Europe for change of air, and of scene—whither, as I have already mentioned, I myself followed in the course of the following year.

I had not been in England above three months, when I received a letter from him, to inform me he was going to be married! I can scarcely say what a blow this gave me. The changes which I had already seen, and suffered from seeing, were those of inscrutable and uncontrollable nature;—but this change was the work of unworthy feebleness and vacillation. And is this, then, the duration of human love—of human sorrow?—Do two short years suffice to root out from the heart all that has grown there so long, and, one would think, so deeply?—Is love, then, a mockery, that it vanishes so soon into air?—Is grief a deceit, that it so soon is converted into joy?—Alas, alas! it is witnessing things like these that sours the milk of humanity in our hearts—that stifles all yearnings of kindliness towards our fellows, and makes us doubting and distrustful of them all. L—— was, however, (to do him justice) ashamed,—and he wrote to me as though *I* were wronged,—as if apology were due to *me*. And I *was* wronged,—an apology *was* due to me. I was no way connected with her whom he lost,—and grieved for her only for his

sake. But to find the friend whom I loved and esteemed thus fickle and shallow,—to see hopes, and affections, and sorrows, thus wiped from his heart at once, as a schoolboy spunges from his slate the sums of the past week,—to learn from *him*, of all men, the lesson of how light are all earthly loves—how speedily even the dearest and deepest are forgotten—these are things which *are* wrongs—these are things for which apology is indeed due.

He said, the very violence of his grief caused its comparatively short duration,—as the fiercest fire is the most speedily burnt out. He talked of the state of dreadful isolation and vacuity in which he found himself, when he was first restored to calmness of mind—of the *besoin d'aimer* implanted within us all—of (what he pleases to term) the well-known fact, that the most wounded hearts are the pronest to love again. He then proceeded to say that, just at that moment when his heart most needed something to cling to, he met with *one who*, &c.——He talked, in a word, in the way that a man always does, when he is about to

do a thing he knows to be wrong, and yet is determined to do it—when he is lowered in his own esteem, and is conscious that he shall be so in that of his friend. He strove to deceive both himself and me.

It is true, indeed, that such grief as his was *could* not last;—it must have ceased, or he must have died. But it should not have passed away thus—like a storm in June, leaving every thing gay and brilliant as before. It should have been succeeded by that deep, inward feeling, which is more calm than sorrow, less clouded than melancholy—which rests itself in holy fixedness upon its loved cause,—and which is not only not fled from, but is so cherished, that it would be punishment as well as sacrilege, to seek to replace it by any lighter and more recent affection.

But, after all, why should I be angry with L——? It is thus always;—this, in very truth, is "the way of the world."—Oh! what a hollow, heartless, evil-hearted world it is!—Like the fabled apples of the East, it is without, all bloom and beauty—within, foulness and ashes. Its sun shines

and looks bright, that it may scorch your brain, —its breezes blow, that they may chill you to the bones. It is shallower than a summer stream, and more rocky at bottom;—colder than the winter's ice—and, like it, faithless and fragile. The man who trusts to it may be assured that he is leaning upon a rotten staff, which will not only break beneath his weight, but pierce him to the heart as he falls.

Look around, and every where, and at every moment, we shall see a repetition of the conduct of my fickle friend. We are like well-disciplined troops in action—no sooner does one man fall, than the ranks close up, and it could not be told where he stood. It is but a fortnight ago that I went with my nephew to the rejoicings which took place upon young ——'s coming of age. Oxen were roasted whole in the park—the ale flowed in rivers—and the peasants danced gaily on the lawn. Within, every thing was feasting, and revelry, and brightness—the walls rang with music—the very air breathed of mirth and happiness. As I gazed upon the brilliant scene — women radiant with

youth, and beauty, and showy dress, and flashing jewels—and the "troops of friends" of the young host—young like him, and buoyant with early spirit, and present gaiety, and prospective happiness—together with all the accompaniments of such scenes—streaming lights, and music, and wine, and pealing merriment—as I looked upon these things, I say, I could not but call to mind, that in that very room, not fifteen months before, the father of the youthful heir had lain in state;—instead of branches of green leaves, and garlands of bright flowers, the walls were hung throughout with black—the only lights were the wax tapers of the chamber of death—instead of loud mirth, there were the tiptoe-tread and whispering of grief—for light laughter there were deep sobs—in the place of feasting, there were bitter tears. The tenants who now made merry in their young landlord's honour, then mourned for their old one's loss—the very men who now pealed the rejoicing bells for the one, then tolled the death-knell of the other.—And yet all these things seemed forgotten as utterly as if they had never existed. No eye seemed less

bright—no brow more clouded—for the contrast which was still so recent.—No shade of recollection or regret passed over the brightness of those faces of joy!

All, I am sure, have witnessed parallel scenes to this. It is our custom, and, perhaps, a wise one, to make our places of worship places of burial also. The presence, as it were, of the dead, is likely beyond all else to lead to devotional feelings.—And who has not seen a family surrounded by monuments of their kindred—of those who were deeply dear, and have been lately lost,—sitting with countenances as cold and unmoved as the marble records on which they gazed;—who has not seen them, even, step with as firm a tread upon the stone which covered the remains of those they had loved, as if they were still pacing on the high way?

Who has not seen these things?—Who has not beheld more speedy and more utter forgetfulness even than this? It seems as if it were a law of our nature that every thing should decay with rapidity, even affection and regret. Are the characters of love, then, traced upon sand—that the first wave

of worldly collision can wash them out?—Is there no rock whereupon to found the edifice of friendship, or of love? To what purpose should we give up our hearts to all the joys of fond intercourse—the sweetness of fixed friendship—the delight of deep love,—if, in very truth, they be all thus airy, unsubstantial, and unreal? If we are to be forgotten before a second spring's grass has risen upon our graves—if we are to forget, before the very monument which tells our grief is completed,—it is better to have no loves—no friendships—no ties of kindred or of long remembrance—no gushings of affection—no yearnings of the heart. Let us say, at once, our connections are those of circumstance, of convenience,—at best, of light regard;—to gratify, perhaps, a gust of transient passion—to indulge the fancy of one passing hour. But if distance be placed between us—and, still more, if death finally intervene—then all is gone, never to return or to be remembered—all is obliterated, as though it had never been: we are (to use a homely, but most forcibly-expressive, phrase) out of sight—and *therefore* out of mind also.

Oh! God, and is it thus indeed? The very beasts of the field remember and sorrow for their lost fellows; and are we less human than they?—No!—there are *some* hearts which can never forget—*some* things which can never be forgotten. No!—there are *some* affections, over which Death has no power—which Time itself is unable to cancel. If I were to number the years which were given to man in the early ages of the world, *one* feeling, at least—*one* recollection would still burn at the bottom of my soul.

"That love where Death has set his seal"—is to me the deepest, as it is the holiest, of all. It is without the impurity and earthly alloy of human passion—yet more strong and more fervent than any thing *but* human passion can ever be. Violent grief, as I have before said, must pass—and in those who are, as I was, thrown by necessity into the full current of worldly society, even deep melancholy will be worn off also. But the soul-seated remembrance which remains of the excess of that affection which is at once the most vehement and the softest—the tenderest and the fiercest—of all

mortal feelings—what can erase *that?* The sun-like heat and radiance of passion, though themselves no more, are mirrored, as in the moon, in this pure memory. I look on these feelings no longer as recollections—they are become *part of myself.* And can I believe that *these* will ever pass? No; when they cease to exist, it will be when I cease to exist also. They are like writing engraven by a diamond upon glass—it cannot be destroyed unless the glass itself be broken.

FRAGMENT X.

* * * * * *

It was in the month of October that I was obliged to go to London on business. I had, as I believe I have mentioned, travelled straight from Southamptom, where I landed, to my father's,—without going to town at all. I was, therefore, obliged to go to settle the affairs incident to my return to England,—and I had postponed it thus long, from the strong disinclination which I then felt for exertion or business of any sort. But, at last, it became necessary that I should put it off no longer—so I went.

I had expected to find London greatly altered—but it was more so even than I anticipated. Six-and-twenty years must always, and in all places, work great change,—but *these* six-and-twenty years had done more, perhaps, than any period of similar duration ever did before, or ever will again. I

had left England in the early part of the French Revolution;—and the quarter of a century which immediately succeeded is, I believe, unparalleled in the history of the world, with respect to the number, the extent, and the completeness of the changes which marked its course. In London, too, these changes were to be seen the most strongly, and at once. Those which I had felt in my own home—in the quiet country village of which I have been speaking—were of a totally different character;—more painful, but less surprising—more sad, but less general and complete. The outward aspect of every thing was there the same;—there was no strong, or even visible, difference in the dress, the manners, or the habits of the people:—It was, perhaps, even the feeling that every thing *seemed* so much like what I had left, while every thing *was* so cruelly altered, that had weighed upon my heart, with such severity of oppression; I mean, that the general mass betrayed no change, while of the details scarcely one remained.

But in London the bearing, aspect, and physiognomy of every thing and every body was new

and strange. It would have been impossible for one to walk ten yards without being made strongly sensible of the thorough change of all around,—while, at Wilverham, (as I believe I have already said,) I might, from any thing that struck upon the eye at times, almost have mused myself into the belief that my years of absence, and all that I had done and borne during their course, were one hideous dream,—and that I still stood in youth, and innocence, and peace of heart, in the beloved place of my birth and earliest dwelling.

But no such visions could, for a moment, pass over my mind, in the midst of the thorough and palpable changes of every thing which met my view in London. If there had been nothing more than the dress of the people, it would have been sufficient to shew the lapse of time which had intervened since I was among them last. In the country, as I have noticed, years and years pass away without operating any visible difference in the simple costume of its agricultural inhabitants. The picture of a country labourer of the present day might serve, without any apparent anachro-

nism, for that of his grandfather an hundred years ago. With respect to Londoners, I need not say how vast a difference exists. Let any one refer to the portraits of even their own fathers, and they will at once see the full force of the contrast. It is true, that before the period of my quitting Europe, the violence of the old-fashioned modes had passed away. The hoops and high heads had been banished—and gentlemen no longer walked the streets, in the morning, with silk stockings and buckles, bag and sword. But yet I question whether a more total or striking opposition of costume could be produced than that between the usual dress of about the year 1790—and that which has prevailed since the peace. Gradations and changes of fashion there are at times,—but in this period there has been a complete revolution in dress. When I had been last in London, what would have been thought of a gentlemen if he had appeared at a ball with short, unpowdered hair, and *trowsers?*

I may be deemed to give too much importance to what is, after all, of such very slight moment,—

but my chief endeavour throughout these desultory pages has been to represent, as nearly as I could, the impressions of my mind;—and it is certain that nothing more strongly brought home to it at once the progress and operation of time, than the completeness of the change of which I have been speaking.

The effect of outward objects of sense upon our thoughts, feelings, and recollections, is too intimately known to every man, for it to be necessary for me to comment upon its strength and truth. I say 'truth,'—for one flash of this kind,—whether produced by the agency of sight, sound, or *smell*, is more sudden, forcible, and effectual, in bringing back the memory of the mind to the almost present existence of long-past days,—than all the thought or reflection in the world.

The changes of outward objects, which struck me so much, were not confined to this one item;—carriages, equipages, public conveyances of all kinds, especially—in a word, every thing relating to the advance of what are commonly understood by the term of 'the arts of life'—were equally

unlike what I had remembered in their place. I felt more as if I was entering, for the first time, a foreign city—than revisiting the capital of my own country which had once been known to me so well. Let not those who can look back to a period not only far prior to that of my leaving England,—but, even before I was born—let not them accuse me of affectation or hyperbole in what I have said. If past changes have taken place, they have quietly and gradually changed with them,—instead of which, I was absent altogether, from my youth until now. What I have said of the effect of this difference of position, with reference to moral gradations, is equally, if not more, applicable to the changes in visible objects.

But there were stronger differences even than these, between the manner in which the work of Time appeared to me in London, and at my father's house. In a metropolis, the changes are those of a nation. The subjects of conversation and interest are, in a great proportion, such as relate to the political welfare of a whole people,—or, at all events, to matters of such general and public import and

notoriety, as to be equally familiar to all. The obsoleteness of all those which had interested and agitated the public mind, at the date of my leaving London, was, in itself, a sufficient token of how much every thing was altered since then. With respect to my own family, it has been necessary to add dates to bring home to indifferent persons the length of time which I wished to indicate as having elapsed;—but, it needs only to be stated, to feel at once the interval between the points of time at which, respectively, the flight of the Royal Family of France to Varennes, and the meeting of the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle, could be matters of present occurrence and interest. The former of these events was almost the sole topic of public conversation when I had last been in London—I found every tongue busied with the latter upon my return.

Neither is it with regard to political matters alone that this observation holds good. It is their being of *public* interest that brings them within its scope. In London, especially, there is, perhaps, *more* interest created by politics than by any other

subject of general conversation;—but the current literature, the favourite actors, and the most conspicuous fashionable people and gossip,—of the day also—serve by their succession and contrast to mark the different periods of intervening time.

I had, though I went abroad so early, lived a good deal in London. My father was always there during a certain number of months in the year; and I had had time thoroughly to taste and to appreciate the advantages and pleasures of the society I was leaving. If, in consequence, it cost me the greater regret to be so completely cut off from it, and plunged so suddenly into so very different a life,—I was now the more able to mark the total clearance which had been made of the prominent names in almost every walk of distinction or notoriety. There never was, I must repeat, any period of similar duration, in the course of which so complete and sweeping a change took place. If I had left England, and returned to it, ten years earlier, the difference would not have been nearly so striking. The same eminent men would, for the most part, have still occupied the

public stage, or only recently have left it. But, as it was, the whole generation had vanished from the earth, a new and strikingly distinct one had risen in its place. To instance political life alone,—where was Pitt?—Fox?—Burke?—Sheridan?—Windham? Not only gone,—but already ranked among the recollections of a past age. This was not from mere lapse of time,—for, with the exception of Burke, none of these great men had been dead for any considerable number of years,—and Sheridan had survived till within little more than two years of the time of which I speak. But the total change of the spirit and character of the times—the difference of the feelings, views, and wishes of the public mind—had already thrown these, in fact, recent events, and the actors in them, in the light of distant historical doings and persons. The disappearance of all of them *en masse* had certainly hastened and increased this feeling;—but that it is a true one, I will appeal to the individual experience of every man who interests himself in such subjects. The secret history of George the Second's reign seems, as we read it, scarcely more

remote than that of the debates upon the Regency Bill, or of the trial of Warren Hastings. Half the interest which poor Sheridan inspired during the last years of his decay, arose from his being regarded as the only survivor of a race of long-departed greatness.

But in almost every thing else, I found the change equally thorough and complete. I recollect having been most anxious that my ship should not sail before the publication of a new poem of Mr. Hayley's, which I was most desirous to be able to take with me,—and which was sent to me at Portsmouth, still wet from the press. I now found the whole literary world discussing the merits of the Fourth Canto of Childe Harold, the Heart of Mid-Lothian, and Beppo! Why, an absence of an hundred years *previous* to the date of my departure could not have afforded so striking and singular a contrast! —Dryden, Addison, Prior, Pope, had indeed been dead for above a generation—but their deaths were of the physical men, not of the poets. If one of their contemporaries had arisen from his [almost] century of sleep, and discussed the merits of their

writings,—he would not, by that circumstance, have betrayed the length of his existence. But if I were now to extol, or even seriously to mention, the poetry of Merry, Mrs. Robinson, Mrs. Piozzi, or even of Hayley himself, all first-rate names in my day,—I should be looked upon with little less surprise, and probably with much more contempt, than were excited by the antiquated dresses, obsolete coins, and unintelligible allusions, of the Seven Sleepers when they re-entered their native city.

But the changes among the professors of another kindred, and perhaps still more popular art, touched me the most nearly of all. It will readily be seen that I allude to the stage. In these, the characteristics which I have stated to belong respectively to personal and to public reminiscence,—are, in great measure, conjoined. Political men and authors, are, for the most part, very little known to individuals personally. With regard to authors, especially, this is the case. But even the men distinguished in political life—whose measures are the theme of every-day discussion—whose oratory is nightly to be heard, if we choose

to walk to Westminster to hear it,—even these men are known to the vast majority of their contemporaries, through no other medium than that of the newspapers, or of the speeches and pamphlets they may choose themselves to publish. This particularly in such a country as England, is most singular—but no one can deny it to be true. Few persons, even among the educated classes, who are not themselves in parliament, have any knowledge of the voice, the manner, frequently not even of the person, of our most celebrated and eminent orators and public men. But it is (from obvious causes) not so in respect to actors. They embody and give breath to the creations of the author, who perhaps may be seated next to you, without your having any knowledge of who he is. They appear before you, night after night, till their faces, their tones, their habitual manner and gestures, become so familiar to you, that you at last almost feel surprise that they do not know you as well as you know them. Their *names* are equally in the public mouth and ear as those of the other classes of men which I have instanced above,—while their persons become allied

to a feeling of lang-syne kindliness, to which *they* never can give rise.

But I forget that I write in the tone, and with the ideas, of a past age—and that nobody goes to the play "night after night," *now*. The public taste has taken a new direction,—should I be much wrong in calling it a new caprice? In my time, the strength of literary talent lay in the drama. A successful writer for the stage rose at once into estimation and repute. It was the field for the greatest display and exertion of ability;—it offered to them the highest reward. Accordingly, those powers which, in later times, have been turned into other channels—then almost all flowed conjointly towards the stage. The theatre was the focus of attraction, and resort, of all men distinguished for literary tastes and talents.—Poets and wits, and the amateurs and pretenders to wit and poetry—congregated there. In a word, dramatic writing was then the fashionable literary vent of the day,—and consequently carried with it all those nameless and indescribable privileges and charms, which fashion always, and fashion only,

gives. I need not say how utterly all this has now passed away;—but, perhaps, I ought to say how sadly the contrast pressed upon me, on my return. For otherwise, few of the present day would understand how any man could regret that so unfashionable an amusement as the theatre was no longer the *ton*. I am not going to argue the matter with them—I shall not enter into any discussion about the relative merits of the drama and the opera, of sense and sound. Throughout these recollections, I have avoided disputation, and confined myself to feelings and to facts.

Thus, whether the change of which I have now spoken is for the worse or the better, was to me perfectly immaterial and indifferent. It had taken place; its effect upon me was painful and saddening —that was quite enough. But surely there are few who would not have felt similarly under similar circumstances. When I last had been within the walls of a theatre, Kemble and Mrs. Siddons were in their zenith—in all the fulness of that unparalleled union of the personal beauty and mental gifts so necessary, yet so rare, in their profession—

so, still more, extraordinary to be thus possessed, and exerted, by two members of the same family, in the same direction, and at the same time. They were now both retired—still living, indeed, but lost to the public; from all but their own circle of friends, they had passed away. Mrs. Jordan, too, whom I had left full of the brightest and most overflowing mirth, and laugh, and life,—and inspiring them to all, by the lavish scattering of her resistless fascinations—where was she?—Dead, in poverty, and in a foreign land!—Where was Dicky Suett, so grotesque and irresistible?—where Parsons?—Weston?—Edwin?—all passed—all gone—all vanished—all dead! Even the houses themselves had been destroyed. Where was Old Drury?—Where was the other well-known theatre?—How was I to recognise them in the vast and stately structures which now stood upon their site?—fine *buildings*, I believe and admit—but, as *playhouses*, how unlike and how inferior to those which I had left!

Upon looking over what I have said concerning

London, I am afraid I shall be thought to resemble the old Marquis in Gil Blas, who said that even peaches had grown smaller since the days of his youth. But I am not, in justice, reproachable with any folly of that kind. It is the change, not the deterioration, of every thing I found, in comparison with every thing I had left, of which I have been complaining. I am ready to believe that that change has been improvement also—but it is change still. To revert to the illustration with which I began—a man may find in every respect a superior city in the metropolis of a foreign country to that of his own:—but which does his heart prefer? The London to which I returned, was certainly superior to that which I had left—but it was new, it was strange, it was not what I had expected to find. It was like making a new acquaintance—not meeting again with an old friend. The former may intrinsically have the most merit—but we always love the latter the best.

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FRAGMENT XI.

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It is strange to reflect upon the vast difference with which we view the same objects in youth, and in more advanced age. It is, perhaps, still more strange to consider how many things we totally overlook when we are happy and healthful, which are, as it were by fatality, the very first which meet our eyes and arrest our attention, when in sorrow, sickness, and decline. For my own part, I have, since my return, as a saddened and prematurely-aged man, to that home which I had left young, and strong, and thoughtless, and happy,—often striven to account for my having formerly been so blind to the scenes of wretchedness and want, which obtrude themselves upon me every day. Those in high station are always, I take it, ignorant of the extent of the misery which exists around them. Some shrink, through the sensi-

tiveness of compassionate feelings, from bringing home to their eyes and minds the immediate reality of that which they must sometimes partly see, and perhaps more distinctly guess of. Others, —and, I fear, the majority—are not over-zealous to seek out suffering which it would be their duty to relieve,—and, thence, are both sceptical and tetchy when any thing occurs to force it, in some degree, upon their notice. Perhaps, however, they may be said rather to desire to be incredulous, than to be so in fact—for, in that case, they would be free from that angry soreness which is almost always the attendant of that half-conscious paradoxical unbelief, which is more the effect of the will than of the reason.

But these hypotheses are insufficient to account for the imperfect knowledge which I now found I had had of the misery existing under the very shadow, as it were, of my own dwelling. For my mother, (as I believe I have already stated,) had always not only made us the ministers of her relief to want, already known to her,—but also had employed us to seek out, and to sift the

exigencies and the merits of the poor around. And this, I believe, she did with a view to prevent that cold and callous indifference, which I have just reprobated, becoming grafted upon our young dispositions. Such, I doubt not, was her motive —and in my sister it has had its full effect. And so, I am confident, it would have had in poor Frederick, if he had lived to become master of his estate. For myself, I was thrown so early in life into a state of society so totally different, that I cannot answer for how far I might have become an exception to the heartless heedlessness of the general rule. As it was, I found that I came within it to a degree of which I little dreamed.

This was first brought immediately home to my conviction, by some circumstances which attracted my attention, towards the close of the year during the summer of which I had returned to Wilverham. It chanced to be a very severe winter—and the manner in which this was felt by the poor in our village, proved to me that I had indeed little knowledge of how much misery exists in the world which the high and wealthy seldom see, and scarcely

think of. Of course, it is of the poor, the very poor, I speak,—for it is they alone who physically feel the severities of our northern seasons. I know there are many who shrink when the weather-cock points from the East,—who affect to be living conjunctions of the thermometer and barometer, feeling inwardly and intensely every gradation of heat and vicissitude of weather. But it is the very absence of real suffering from the elements that causes this affected, or, at any rate, trivial sensitiveness to their minuter changes. When these victims of ideal delicacy and imaginary illness do venture to go forth, they are enveloped in a multiplicity of casings which preserve their bodies, like mummies, from the least touch of the outward air; and, at home, they have all those means and inventions to create heat and exclude cold which luxury has, of late years, superadded to comfort. But the poor have none of these;—their coarse and insufficient covering has no winter increase, and their ill-built dwellings—with their creviced walls, broken casements, and doors that do not close,—remain un-

heated by the miserable fire which is scarcely sufficient to cook their scanty and unsavoury food.

Most of us, I think, are apt to be hard upon the poor, and nearly all, as I have said, are too careless concerning them. We are earnest in preaching to them content, and look little to what causes they have for it. We strictly enforce their duties,—are discountenancing and harsh towards their few relaxations and pleasures,—and if they sink into misdoing, justice, severe and unpitying, is the utmost they have to expect. Whenever—and heaven knows it is sufficiently rarely—the labouring man indulges at the village wake, or the market-town fair, are we not in haste to call him idle and dissolute? Do we not say, "He complains of the hardness of the times, why is he not at his work? No wonder he should be poor, if he spends his time in diversion and debauchery?" Alas! should we call him, who labours through the day, idle if he pause one moment to wipe his throbbing brow? Should we be in haste to withhold the one honey-drop in a full-measured cup of bitterness? Let us look at

the life of a country day-labourer in England, and say whether it be one in which the duties are too few, and the pleasures too many. As long as toil, severe and continual,—and poverty, intense and unremitting—are reckoned evils, so long must the condition of our working poor be considered one which demands at our hands the utmost compassion and forbearance. A poor man is a man still; he has the same impulses, appetites, and affections that we have;—but to us they give enjoyment by their indulgence,—to him suffering, by their denial and restraint. It is said, for instance, that it is worse than improvident for a labouring man to marry, until he has acquired some probability of being able to support his family, or at least has laid by some small sum to set him afloat in the world. In this case, marriage would be denied to him altogether,—for, if he were to wait till he could marry with prudence, he could never marry at all. And are we to expect that a man is to lose his nature because he is poor? The passions are coarser, perhaps, in lowly bosoms than ours, but they are not less strong. It has been much the

fashion of late to sneer at the loves of clowns and country lasses, but I have known as deep instances of attachment,--I have known affection as intense, as fervent, and even as morally, though not perhaps as socially, refined—in humble life, as ever was felt in the highest.

If we go lower in the moral scale, and from innocent suffering descend to guilt, still we find almost as many causes to pity as to blame; at all events, we have strong reason to be thankful for our own more happily-cast lot. For, the same impulses which lead us into venial error, sink them into serious crime;—the same passions which cause in us only moral misdoing, occasion in them offences of deep guiltiness, visited by severe and ignominious penalty. Why is it that so many crimes are committed among the lower orders of society, in comparison with those in the richer?—Because they have such infinitely more temptation. A rich man has around him the necessaries, the comforts, the luxuries of life;—what excuse has he to commit those offences which, as directly injurious to society, have been branded with shame, and made

liable to punishment? The poor man is starving, and he steals:—then the cry is raised of depravity, and the necessity of severe example—and he is hanged. Ought we not to bless that better fortune which has placed us beyond the reach of temptations, under which, it is very probable, we also might have fallen? But the contrary is the case; whenever a man in the condition of a gentleman commits an act which is visited by legal punishment, all manner of pity is excited by his misfortune,—all kinds of influence are exerted to procure his pardon. The poor man who sinned, perhaps—probably—in consequence of the extremity of temptation, is punished, without a question or a remark, a as matter of course,—while the gentleman, who has had comparatively no temptation, meets with all consideration and leniency.

It is this very matter-of-course*ness* which renders us so blind, or, at least, so insensible, to the sufferings of the poor. Many persons, who are naturally humane, think slightly of what is of such every-day occurrence. But this every-day occurrence, which renders the compassion less, makes the

suffering the more. That which is constant, and to escape from which there is no hope, is surely the severest to endure. The representation which is given us of the punishment of another state is, that it is unremitting and eternal.

There is also another class of persons who do not pity the poor, because they have been taught to consider them more worthy of envy. Their ideas of poverty are a white cottage, woodbine, and contentment,—brown bread, innocence, and clouted cream. In the estimation of such persons, those cares, anxieties, and passions, which create a storm in our hearts, leave unrippled the current of rural life. Alas! they exist there equally, if no more; and to them are superadded evils of which these dreamers of the golden age have no idea. The mental inflictions of those in humble life are not a whit fewer or less than those of higher station, and their physical sufferings are exclusively their own. But indeed physical sufferings always add increased sharpness and intensity to those of the heart and mind.

But I have wandered far from my original point,

which was, to give an account of a scene of poverty which I witnessed, about this time, in our own village. On coming home one day, I found at the gate a poor woman, who had come, she said, to beg a little wine for her husband, who was ill. The appearance of the woman herself was not a little melancholy and painful. She appeared to be under thirty; so it was not from age that the beauty which she evidently once possessed had faded almost entirely away. Her features had become pinched and sharpened. I say had *become*, for nothing is more easy than to distinguish when this appearance is natural, and when it is the effect of later and severer causes. Her eye was sufficiently bright,—but (if I may so speak) it looked querulous and peevish, as if the spirit had become acrid in struggling with evils which it was too sensitive to bear meekly, and had too much strength to sink under. Her cheek was pale, not from the paleness of disease, but that dry whiteness which is produced by the effects of want. The skin was wrinkled, not with the furrows of age, but as if the flesh had fallen away from beneath it, and it now

hung loose upon the bone. Her voice was much what might be looked for from her person—sharp, thin, and (somewhat doggedly) complaining. I was much struck with her appearance, and the story of extreme wretchedness which she told me; and, after giving orders for her to be supplied with what she wanted, I determined to go myself the next day to her husband's house, both to convince myself of the truth of her statements, and to give that personal aid of consolation and kindness, which is one of the greatest which a rich man can bestow on a poor one. If country gentlemen, and, still more, if the wives of country-gentlemen, knew the degree of good which they would do, merely by a little *personal* inquiry and relief, I am very sure that no selfish or falsely-sensitive feelings would withhold them from visiting the sick-beds of the poor. I have had occasion to see (especially in the instance of my poor mother) the different estimation in which the poor held those who were equally charitable to them in strict essentials, because the one visited them and the others did not. When a person of rank speaks soothingly, and with the

expression of interest, to one in poverty and sickness, he knows that *all* around him is not destitution and abandonment,—he sees that those whom he is used to look up to with reverence and respect, have some sympathy with what he feels—some compassion for what he suffers;—and his eye rekindles, and his heart again grows warm, with the gratification of one of the first wants which nature has implanted within us—that of fellow-feeling and condolence. As one of our greatest masters of the heart has said, it is not "the bit and the sup" alone, but the giving them with "the look o'kindness, which gars them digest sae weel," that is among the foremost of the good deeds by which the rich have it in their power to succour and to comfort the poor.

In sickness, Heaven knows, how much kindness and comfort of all kinds are needed! All of us must, I am sure, have felt what very wretches sickness makes us, even when we have every aid and alleviation which money can buy, and which "troops of friends" can tender or devise. What must it then be in poverty! When the poor man

is what he considers to be but slightly, but what we should regard as being severely, ill,—he painfully continues his labour—for he knows that with the cessation of his labour his means of subsistence cease also. We all know what lassitude and loathing of exertion illness brings with it—what must it be to be then exposed to the unpitying weather, and to active bodily toil,—when fever makes the head burning and dizzy, and the frame relaxed and tottering, to continue long hours at labour! When he can hold out no longer, and is driven to his bed in despair—what is his condition then? His wages cease with his work, and at the time when he needs comforts the most, he is obliged to pinch with even more than usual severity. His wants increase and his means diminish;—fuel to procure tolerable warmth,—food, such as sickness can alone tolerate, and without which it is additionally wretched, but which is far more costly than his decreasing means can afford;—all these things, (to say nothing of direct medical charges), are added sources of necessary expense, at a moment when his wretchedly scanty pittance is entirely cut

off. The probable consequence is that he goes without all—or at the best, that he procures them in a miserably inadequate degree. Then, if his illness lasts, he sees his wife and children hungering before his eyes,—he himself suffers with the utmost rapidity of increase,—and it is well if he do not perish in this state of unutterable wretchedness, leaving those who are still dearer to him than himself to starve.

These feelings naturally rose with some vividness in my mind, as I paced my way to the cottage of the sick man. It is at the extremity of the village, at the corner where the road turns off to S———. The situation is considerably exposed, for the wind blows right over the heath, from the eastward, upon those houses which are too much up the hill to be sheltered like the rest of the village. It was an intensely hard frost,—bitterly cold, and accompanied by an easterly wind, which almost cut you into two. When I entered the hut,—it can scarcely be called cottage—a scene of wretchedness presented itself, such as, though I have seen many, I never witnessed before, and such as I devoutly

trust I never may witness again. The man lay extended upon the miserable bed, the ragged coverlid and blanket of which, of unspeakable filth, were eked out with his own clothes, which were also spread over him;—the fire consisted of two sticks, placed point to point, and the feeble heat that they gave seemed to go up the yawning chimney, which admitted the freezing air. There were not any very obvious rents or dilapidations in the walls, but the cutting wind appeared to enter all around. I had on my great coat and, of course, my hat, and yet I never suffered more severely from cold in my life, than during the ten minutes or quarter of an hour that I remained in the cottage. The wife was heating a little of the wine she had got the day before—and there were four children, all quite young, in different parts of the room, the only one of which the house consisted. In one corner was their bed—that is, there was some straw, which I should not have thought good enough for my pointers to lie on. The low prices had prevented the farmers from thrashing out their corn, and consequently there was a scarcity of straw. This is

most severely felt by the poor—for, alas! it is little known how many there are who, like these wretched children, have no other bed. They all were with naked feet, and their clothes seemed thin and scanty. They had that look also, which, though you do not know the age of the children, tells you that they are undersized;—their skin was blue and mottled, and their whole frames were pinched with the cold. Each had a bit of the coarsest bread in his hand, on which he had smeared the least morsel of lard—and this was their dinner!—The woman seemed completely soured by poverty—she spoke once or twice sharply to her husband, and harshly to the children—and yet evidently restrained herself on account of my presence. Notwithstanding this, there was something about her which convinced me that she was not naturally shrewish, but that it was poverty and suffering which had made morose a disposition originally kindly.

The sick man himself was an object of unmixed compassion. He had been a fine manly fellow in his person, and still was so in mind; and bore his sufferings, bitter as they were, with a steadiness and

resignation of endurance, which might have done honour to higher philosophy. He had received a hurt in the harvest-season, which, without causing any definite disease, had undermined and finally destroyed his strength. He had struggled for a long time,—longer, perhaps, than in prudence he ought,—and he had now been confined to his bed upwards of three weeks. Though want had operated so fearfully, his mind had revolted from asking what he considered alms; and, it was with much reluctance that, the day before, he had permitted his wife to beg a little wine, to relieve the extremity of his weakness. Though not in my father's employ, I had previously known the man by sight; but, I certainly should not have recognised the strong stalwart fellow he had been, in the emaciated wretch who lay before me. His hand—the hand of a mature labouring man—was as thin and delicate as that of a girl of fifteen; his cheeks had literally formed a vacuum on each side between the jaw and the cheek-bone, and his voice was husky, and almost extinct. The dirt which his extreme poverty rendered remediless, independently of its

own disgusts and inconveniences, seemed to cause him shame; he apologized, repeatedly, for the annoyance which it must occasion me; and appeared, while he suffered from so many causes, to be ashamed only of that.

I asked him if he had had no medical advice. He said he had—that he had sent for Mr. F——, who had been with him once, and had sent him "some stuff," but that it had done him no good. He added, that Mr. F—— asked him a few questions, but did not seem much to understand his case; that he had wanted him to examine his side, (where his hurt had been,) but that he said there was no occasion for it; and, that he hurried away, promising to come back the next week, but that he never had been there again. I confess I was a little indignant with this fellow for his heartlessness and inhumanity, but I believe that such instances of both frequently occur. My sister told me of one where she sent an apothecary a second time to a poor girl who was dying of consumption, and he almost frightened the little remaining life out of her body, by scolding her for "her forwardness in

making ladies write notes to him, when he had given her case full attention before,"—though in fact he had treated her much as F—— did the poor fellow of whom I have been speaking.

This poor man's case was like that of an hundred others, but it appeared to me cruelly severe nevertheless. His utmost and never-ceasing labour could procure only a shilling a-day, that is six shillings a-week, and on this he had supported,—in extreme penury, certainly, but still supported,—his wife and increasing family. Let those who are inclined to think harshly or with recklessness of the sufferings of the poor, just reflect for a moment what it is to support a family on six shillings a-week, There is lodging, food, clothes, and fuel, to be procured out of a sum which with us would not pay for one dinner. The consequence is, that they have them all of the meanest kind, and in the scantiest quantity. The common invocation of the beggars in the street, though I know it to be only by rote, has often touched me deeply, and wrung alms from me in despite of my better judgment,—"You have never known what it is to want!"

Alas! what must it be, indeed, to be without those things which we have enjoyed as of course, until, like health, their value becomes disregarded, till we are taught what it is to need them. Take even the last necessity which I have named—fuel,—let us conceive what it must be, in weather like that which it then was, to be compelled to stint ourselves to the narrowest point in this, if not to be entirely without it. The chill of the limbs sinks into the heart, and our prospect never appears so gloomy and unhopeful, as when we are undergoing bodily suffering—that of cold especially. The man whom I was visiting had experienced all these wants to their extremity—he had toiled with that unremitting labour which is the only inheritance of the poor—he had seen his family increasing around him in a state little short of famine—he had seen his wife, whom he had married in the full gush of early affection, grow faded in person, and soured in mind—he had seen all this, and yet he had kept on with perseverance, if not with cheerfulness—with unrepining at least, if not in contentment. But at last, when illness became added to poverty, his

spirit, as he told me, sank within him at once; as the sturdy tree which had been unmoved by storms, is felled to the earth by one stroke of lightning. When he was laid on his bed, disabled by weakness and disease, and beheld—the reverse of the widow's cruse—his handful of sustenance growing daily less;—when he saw the scanty portion of his children being progressively meted out with a more niggard hand;—when he saw his wife, whose heart remained uninjured, however her temper might be touched, stinting herself that those children might want the less —— alas! were not these things sufficient to sink the stoutest spirit into the utmost depths of hopelessness and despair?

Those persons who adopt the worst part of the stoical philosophy, and steel themselves against compassion, by denying the existence of pain (in others),—always reply to cases like this—"Why does he not go to the parish?" Alas! they, and such as they, have succeeded but too much in eradicating that fine spirit of independence, which was the truest and noblest English quality—and which was, more than all else, a stimulus to vir-

tuous and honourable exertion;—why will they sneer and carp at it in the few instances in which it still exists?—Before I went abroad I recollect that an English peasant considered being on the parish nearly as great a disgrace as being in gaol—he would almost as soon have owned himself a felon as a pauper. But this has nearly all vanished now—and there are very few who do not take the parish alms with equal, if not greater, readiness than the stipend of independent labour. But there are some who still nourish the old feeling on this score—and this poor man was one of them. I do not mean to say that he would rather have starved than applied for parochial relief—but I do say that he would have postponed it so long, that, in all probability, he would have perished from the lateness of the succour.

I, of course, had every assistance given to this poor fellow, and he ultimately got about again; but the impression which the whole scene made upon me was of no slight force, and I hope will not be of short duration. It was in the middle of December, and our Christmas party was already

assembled. There were many young people, friends of my nephews, in the house—and I could not help drawing and dwelling upon the contrast between the rich and the poor man's home. In the group before me, every thing was youthful, brilliant, and happy;—in that which I had just left Cold, Darkness, and Hunger, were the daily guests, and Sickness was now an added visitant;—while the one were enjoying all that this world gives to enjoy, the others were suffering every infliction which God has doomed his creatures to suffer;—*here* the crackling blaze of the Christmas fire was giving warmth to the limbs, and gladness to the eyes; *there* they were shivering in the severity of the season;—*here* they were feasting in the abundance of luxury—*there* they were hungering unto death.

I would only wish, that, at that season of the year, when the house of almost every rich man throughout the land resounds with increased hospitalities,—he would think upon the enduring poor. Let him reflect, that to them it brings no new comfort or enjoyment; on the contrary, the cold of the winter is added to the severities which they

already undergo. Their enjoyments are fewer, rather than more—their wants are greater rather than less—than at other times. Let the rich man call these facts to mind—and let him ask himself whether any misery exists of his creating, or within his power to relieve;—whether his oppression, or even his selfish carelessness, has made one heart sad at this period of accustomed gaiety—one fellow-creature suffering at this season of usual enjoyment;—let him ask himself whether he has, as far as in him lies, fulfilled those purposes for which Providence has put wealth into his hand—the diffusing succour and kindly relief among the lowly, the poor, the suffering, and the sick;—let him rigidly ask his heart these things, before he permits himself to enjoy the pleasures and happinesses which are clustered beneath his better-fortuned roof.

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FRAGMENT XII.

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THERE has always been much said about periodical seasons of festival—Christmas in particular. A sentimental fondness is continually expressed for old customs, and lamentations are as constantly made on their progressively falling into disuse and decay. I have always thought this a false feeling—at least, that people thus cause themselves much melancholy under the idea of creating pleasure. Do not old customs speak of the speedy vanishing of happiness, and the overcasting at noon of a brilliant morning? Do they not tell of merry faces and hearts having become wrinkled and withered, and finally cold and crumbled in the grave? Do not periodical returns of feasting and revelry call into view the loss of those who once joined in them with us, and the loss of what we ourselves were then? Do they not necessarily cause retrospection,

and *can* retrospection be happy? If we look back on what caused us former enjoyment, do we not grieve at its being gone?—and if the past be in itself gloomy and saddening, are not its gloom and sadness still present and real?—

> "Joy's Recollection is no longer joy
> But Sorrow's Memory is a sorrow still."—

In the first days of bright youthfulness, when the heart has acquired a force of enjoying beyond the mere recklessness of childhood, and before it has felt the astringent power of the cares, if not the sorrows, of maturity—while the animal spirits still rise with the gushings of the blood, like the sap in a young tree,—but have more vividness and potency than in the merely sapling days—*then*, indeed, old customs, so as they be of merriment, are warmly welcomed as causing present joy, with a total heedlessness of the knell which they sound over past happiness. But a very few years make all this pass away;—and Christmas comes to be a season of reminiscence rather than of enjoyment. We begin to say "Oh! how happy we *used* to be!"

"What a charming Christmas we passed such a

year"—or "How poor —— used to enjoy this!" Alas, how speedily does this catalogue increase!—the sharers and increasers of our former pleasure become, when divided from us by distance, or finally lost by death, the causes of our present pain. I have often remarked in a Christmas party the vivid and painful contrast between the manner in which the very young enjoy, and that in which the mature and the old contemplate their enjoyment,—a contrast far, far greater than that which the difference of age, and consequently of feeling, ordinarily and necessarily causes. The reason is plain; we do not at common times reflect bitterly on the griefs and losses which have happened to us since the same period of a former or a distant year—but the return of a stated season brings the return of concomitant reflection;—we think on what those seasons used to be, on what they now are,—and on all the pains and sorrows of the intervening time;—with these feelings in our hearts we have before our eyes, gaiety and brightness, and music, and feasting, the light sound of youthful voices, and the merry-tripping peal of youthful

laughter;—the contrast strikes us with bitterness, and we are sad.

And it does not, as I have before said, need the lapse of long time to give this contrast force. A few years bring many changes—and often—oh, how often!—is the heart shrivelled and grown old while the "brow" is still "brent,"—and the hair still dark and flowing. Christmas returns, and brings with it revelry but not merriment; we permit and mix in the outward gaieties of custom, because the season enjoins them, not because the heart is glad.

Christmas is indeed the time of old customs—and these, independently of the causes of individual sorrow and regretfulness, I have always,—at least *very* long,—considered melancholy, and as such have shunned. They are to me like those emblems of death, which some ancient nation used to set on high in the scene of festival—like a constant repeating of the injunction "Eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die." They are the vestiges of the carousals, and the mirth of former ages,—of the customs of those whose very memory on earth is passed. They are like ruins, which

speak of humbled pride, and extinguished greatness—of hospitable hearths and strong and stately towers now scenes of desolation and masses of decay—in one word, they are the true and constant emblems of the speedy *passing* of all things human. Can it be denied that this is true? and if it be so, how are such things calculated to create or to promote mirth and joyousness? I suppose I shall be told of the "melancholy pleasure," which the contemplation of the past excites—but, without speaking of the discrepancy which must exist between this species of pleasure and any thing like gaiety or mirth—I, at once, deny its existence. The very term used to convey it shews that it is only a particular degree and kind of pain. Or if it *be* pleasurable, it must be to the very happy—to whom this peculiar species of pain will give gratification, as an occasional discord in music increases the harmony. It is, indeed, only these who love to seek instances and causes of factitious sorrow;—tragedies—books of unhappiness and pathos—and occurrences of a painful nature. Those who have really suffered fly from these things, and strive to

draw from their opposites a passing—though it be only a passing—forgetfulness of all that is connected with sorrow and distress :—

" The happy love excited feeling—
The tear which fabled grief can bring ;—
But the breast whose ill can know no healing
Shrinks from all name of suffering."

Christmas has connected with it yet another cause of sadness;—it is the close of the year.—At the termination of one and the beginning of another of these solemn divisions of time, the most reckless pause—the most thoughtless think. One of the strongest proofs of how very strongly this period affects the mind, is that, notwithstanding that the multitude of new-years which have risen one upon another has made all that can be said upon the subject trite and common,—yet, truisms as they are, all that *is* said never fails to be deeply and solemnly impressive. And is this season, which has been finely said to " remind us of the progress of time, and of our own progress towards eternity"—is this season well-fitted to give rise to light mirth, or boisterous festivity?—Is this season, which sets

before us in reproachful array the misdoings of past time, which speaks loudly the speedy flitting of the present, and opens an unwritten page of the doubtful future, to be filled with our destinies and deeds—is this a season—are these circumstances,—calculated to make the heart light, and the spirits buoyant?—Assuredly, No.—And therefore, as I have said, it is only those whose past is unclouded, whose present is happy, and whose to-come is promising—that is, it is only the very young—for where are they of a ripe age who can boast of these things?—who *enjoy* the festivities of this season of all festivity.

It was very early in life that all enjoyment of this kind ceased to me. I was only eighteen when I left home, and the first Christmases which I passed in my banishment—it may well be called so—were naturally most painful. Christmas had always been kept with all its gaieties at Wilverham, and the contrast was in consequence the more bitter. Afterwards, it became to me a period of still greater gloom and pain—for one Christmas had occurred during the full tide of my passion

towards Eleanor, and had given rise to several little occurrences which were points of intense recollection. But I did not know the full measure of sadness it could yield, till this, the first Christmas after my return home.

My father's state would naturally have precluded gaieties even at this time,—but he still retained glimmerings of recollection, and was prompt to remark, and almost furious in resenting, any changes which appeared to be made on account of his infirmities.—For, during these periods of occasional comparative strength, he was in part conscious of his usual imbecility, and, as I believe is commonly the case, was indignant at any token of its being apparent to others. In former days, he had always gloried in the proverbial gaiety of the Christmas doings at his house, and had shared in them with particular eagerness and pleasure;—for my father, though a most kind and warm-hearted man, was not one of peculiarly sensitive feelings, and his whole life had flowed in a stream of unruffled happiness. He had, thence, no knowledge of those sensations I have been describing,—

and would have wondered at, and blamed any one who did not enjoy his Christmas festivities with the same old-bred heartiness that he did himself. My sister, therefore, since she had conducted the establishment, had always kept up the outward gaieties of the Christmas time, however little they might be prompted by her own heart;—and just at the period of my return, they were still gayer than usual, from my brother's eldest son approaching within two or three years of his coming of age, —and it being deemed advisable on his account to keep up what is called "a neighbourhood."

The house at Wilverham is ancient, and built in the fashion of Elizabeth's time. The hall, especially, retains its original style. About two thirds of it are paved with stone, and at the upper end is the dais, or raised flooring of wood. At the opposite end is a gallery, supported by richly carved oaken pillars, leading to the principal bedchamber, and its suite of attached apartments, which stand on a sort of *entre sol* by themselves. From the centre of the ceiling, descends a curious piece of carving in wood—circular, hollow, and con-

structed of open work. This terminates in a point, from which hangs the great lamp, or rather lantern, formed of bronze and glass wrought in a Gothic fashion. Two large casemented windows occupy nearly the whole of one side, and opposite to them is the wide-yawning fire-place, which is fitted with dogs, instead of a grate. Over this and corresponding to another facing it, and a third over the dais, is a huge stag's-head in plaster of Paris, with real antlers; and on a label beneath the centre one is inscribed the date of the building, 1594. This has remained in exactly the same state since my earliest memory,—and was always, during my youth, decorated in the same manner every Christmas. It was exactly the same at this time. Such as I have described it, it is well adapted for rustic adornment. The stag's antlers were twined with holly, glittering with its shining leaves, and gay with its brilliant berries. A temporary rail was passed across the hall at the edge of the dais, to partition it off for dancing—and this was covered with living boughs of every description of evergreen. A stupendous fire blazed,

crackled and roared in the ample chimney—and beneath the lantern hung the misletoe, under which every woman in the house, young and old, gentle and simple, was, according to ancient custom, to be kissed.

Such was the appearance which the old hall presented to me on Christmas-eve. Such was, point for point, the appearance which it had presented six-and-twenty Christmases before. It had always been the custom for the musicians of the village-church to come down to the house to sing their Christmas carols, and a large round table was placed for them before the fire in this hall. They came as usual,—and, as usual also, we all went out after dinner into the hall to hear them. My father insisted on being removed thither with the rest, and his great chair was accordingly wheeled to the corner of the fire. The singing began;—it could not, any more than its accompaniment, be considered very good in point of music; but one or two of those who played had some skill on their instruments, and all the singers sang with an eagerness and enjoyment, which more than made

up for their deficiencies. Our group collected round the fire, and encouraged by smiles and praises the homely concert;—but I withdrew a little on one side, and, shadowed from observation by one of the massy supports of the vast mantle-piece, gazed on the scene with unrestrained feelings. My father's figure was one of the most painful parts of it. He was enveloped in his close woollen dress, and his warm cap covered his head; —but the face which appeared from beneath it!— I scarce could bear to look on it. It wore that expression which is, perhaps, the most painful which belongs to dotage—that of imbecile and drivelling gaiety. The face of deadly white was flickered by a miserable smile, and the eye of glassiness was striving to emit a sickly gleam of frozen mirth. I could not bear it, and I directed my attention to the musicians. All the faces seemed new to me—the character of all was the same, but the individual features were different. They were men of stalwart forms, full red cheeks, and iron voices,—and they carolled, as of yore, with rough gaiety,—and drank, as also of yore, frequent horns

of the stout ale which was poured to them out of the huge leathern vessels known in the country by the name of *black-jacks*. I passed my eye round the table to see if I could not find *any* of those who had used to be seated at it in my time.—At last I recognised one face. It was that of a man who played on the bassoon, which circumstance contributed—and truly it was needed—to recal him to my recollection. I remembered a stout-bodied fellow, with a shock black head of hair, and a blue beard, the very epitome of sturdiness and manhood. He was remarkable, also, for puffing the whole strength of his Herculean lungs into his instrument, and sending forth from it in consequence tones more powerful than pleasing. The hair was now scanty, and that and the beard were both white—and the full mottled cheeks were sallow and sunken on the jaw.—Even his playing smacked strongly of age—it was feeble and irregular; and it appeared as if he retained his station more from the influence of long service and recollection than from present help or usefulness. At the moment my eye lighted on him he was gazing

on my father;—and my heart yearned towards him for the feelings which his still expressive countenance plainly shewed. It was like—I mean no irreverence by the comparison—the look which an old dog casts on his disabled master, as he gazes with his speaking eyes up on his face. It was during the interval between two of the carols; and the old man's bassoon had been let drop carelessly across his arm, and rested there, hanging (as those instruments do) from his button, unregarded and forgotten. I could see him comparing the tottering ruin, which my father's appearance presented, with the full pride of strength and manliness which he once displayed—and a tear which had been some minutes gathering in the eye, was just rolling upon the cheek, when his neighbour pulled him by the arm, to remind him that another piece of music was about to begin.

I took care to seek out this old man and speak to him before he left the hall. He had heard of my return, he said, but had feared that I had forgotten him. When I assured him how well I remembered him,—and alluded to the days in

which I had known him, the tears again sprang to his eyes, and he grasped the hand which I had given to him, when I accosted him, as he said, "Ah! Sir, those were happy times indeed;—but they are gone for ever now, Sir;—and there have been sad changes since then:—Mr. Frederick, Sir, and the good dear lady your mother, all gone!—and the Squire so sadly broken,—and you, Sir, don't look as you used to do;—but you have been away many a long year, and have been a great, great way off, as I've been told—I never thought to see you come home again, Sir—" the old man's feelings warmed as he spoke, and, as he turned away to hide his tears, he once more grasped my hand, and exclaimed in a broken and hurried voice —"God bless you, Master Gilbert, God bless you!——"

There was a large and lively party assembled for the Christmas week. My nephew and his brother had several of their friends with them, and there were, besides my sister's daughter, several young girls in the house. On the following day, therefore, after we had been to church in the morning,

there was preparation going on for all sorts of gambols. All "the old customs" of the season were to be observed, and there was much discussion concerning many of these ancient rights. My poor mother, who was always the greatest promoter of that which gave others pleasure, had been particularly skilled in these things;—and how did the remembrance of her dwell within my heart as they were in turn spoken of and arranged! Her powers of exciting real enlivenment and gaiety were equalled only by her gratification in making her house the home of happy hearts and merry faces. Happy hearts and merry faces were here now; but they served only to make *me* more unhappy, and more sad. My sister and I almost shunned each other—for we could distinguish the same feelings in both,—and in this case, mutual confidence would have been the heightening, instead of the alleviation, of mutual pain. But her feelings were not nearly so deep or so acute as mine; in the first place, these changes had occurred gradually before her eyes, and I have already said more than once, how infinitely

less painful that is, than for their effects to flash suddenly and at once upon the heart—

"When together we dwell, and together decay,
The change is less painful to view—
But oh! it is mournful to meet and to say
Was it *thou* that last bade me adieu?"

—Besides this, she had not been so thoroughly chilled by sorrow as I had—and above all, she was repaid by sensations which probably surpass all others—motherly pride and fondness. Her daughter was a lovely girl of about sixteen—just blooming into the perfection of maidenly beauty;—and her liveliness of heart and manners,—her gifts and her accomplishments—shone so distinguishedly among the young and brilliant group by which she was surrounded, that, with such a view before her, no mother's heart could be, as mine was, all—or nearly all—sadness.

The Christmas dinner was, as Christmas dinners usually are, a profuse assemblage of periodical dainties,—and many a periodical jest also was passed upon them. The young people, however, of whom the party was almost entirely composed, were anxious for the evening revelries to begin, and we adjourned

early to the hall.—And now the sports commenced —I was almost inclined to say with the frogs in the fable—" sport to you, but death to me."—The first were the saturnalia of the misletoe, and as " the gentry" were to join in all, the ladies passed under the bough, and many a fair cheek glowed and blushed as young lips touched them. The servants then took their turn, with merriment more noisy, and perhaps more hearty likewise. In this, also, my mind looked back to my youth, and I remembered the high jest which there always used to be, when I was a boy, at my kissing under the misletoe a friend and favourite of my childhood, who was the oldest woman in the house. She was turned of eighty, and at other times seldom emerged from the lower regions of the offices, but on Christmas night she always came, tricked out in her starched and ancient finery, to be kissed by Master Gilbert. This poor old woman had many peculiarities. She had lived in the house from the time she was twelve years old, and had passed through every office from that of errand girl to the important one of upper-housemaid, —till she settled down to a sinecure in the still-room

in her old age—as a worn out horse is turned out to grass for life, as a reward for past service. She always wore the dress which was the fashion when she was about forty, and this made her look even older than she was. With her strange and grotesque image is connected in my mind all the nursery stories of my childhood:—and these were not the common-place Jack the Giant Killers, and Hop-o'-my-thumbs, which have been the delight of all children from time immemorial,—but were, nearly all, events which she had, or fancied she had, witnessed. I say fancied, for she was touched with the incoherence of reason which sometimes attends old age; and believed that she saw sights and heard sounds, visible and audible to none else. In particular, she was firmly persuaded that she used to see the spirit of my father's grandfather,—who had been at the head of the family when she first came to it, and had lived to an extreme old age. He always went by the name of "the old squire"—and she used to affirm that he met her in the long galleries which run across the house, and smile upon her and say a few words of encouragement when she

had been industrious, and look frowningly and with severity when she had been idle. The last time, she said, that she ever saw him was when my father was about to pull down a room which had been built by this old man, to make way for some improvements in the house which he had planned.—The spirit, as old Martha said, looked with a countenance of anger such as she had never seen him wear in life or death; and bade her tell her master that if he persisted in his purpose of destroying what he had built, deep and dire calamity would fall upon all his house. The room was nevertheless destroyed, and old Martha always believed that the prophecy would be realized—Alas! the *event* was.

These recollections may appear merely childish; but they are those of the heart, not of the reason—and the scene which was passing before me was connected with a circumstance relating to poor Martha, which had always touched me extremely. I had ever been her particular favourite, and she had been remarkably kind to me as a child;—and though, as she grew old, she seldom came above stairs, I used often to go and visit her in her large leathern chair

by the corner of the still-room fire. When I left home for India, I took leave of her, but she did not at all understand the distance to which I was going, or the length of time that I should be absent. When therefore, Christmas night came round again, old Martha made herself fine as usual with all her antiquated gear, and came to the hall to receive from me her annual kiss under the green bough. It was with great difficulty that she was made to comprehend that I was far over the sea;—when she *did*, she broke out into the querulous and peevish grief of old age, and instantly went back down stairs, saying, that since Master Gilbert was gone, she never would come up them again—she kept her word;—she sank rapidly into the extremity of decrepitude, and died not long after.

As the lamp shone down through the green leaves and white berries, on a succession of sparkling eyes, and ripe red lips, I thought of old Martha's furrowed face, and puckered mouth, as they used to light up and expand with the smile of true kindliness and affection;—and I thought of her coming to seek for me, when she was never to see me again,

and her countenance of calm gladness changing into inquietude, and from that into despair. "Poor old Martha," I said in my heart, "you did but experience the common fate of all who ever loved me—I was doomed to cause unhappiness to all of them!"

The dancing next began;—the music was placed in the gallery, as it always used to be, and the old hall rang with

"——— Merry pipes, and mirth-resounding feet."

I looked upon the gay and glancing figures before me, and I thought of those which had been as bright in beauty and as instinct with life, when I had mingled among them on that same dais, with all that spirit which a light heart and a strong love of music give to youthful dancing,—"Where are they, *what* are they now?" I exclaimed—"What am I now myself?"

Alas! it is the property of sorrow to draw bitterness from all things!—When it sees fellow sorrow by its side, it is pained by the parallel—when, as it was then the case with me, all around is gaiety and gladness, it is still more pained by the contrast.

When the dancing had ceased, and we were all

assembled at supper, the mirth grew still greater and more loud. All the ancient customs of wassail were practised, and gave zest and piquancy to the existing revelry. At last one of the party trolled forth a merry song, and he was followed by others. After some time, a young girl of about seventeen was earnestly asked to sing. I had particularly observed her during the two days she had been in the house; not only on account of her delicate beauty, but also from a certain shade of natural pensiveness that had now yielded before the merry doings of the season and the scene,—which gave to her, in my eyes, an additional charm, equally interesting and peculiar. She excused herself from singing, on account of having no accompaniment, when one of my nephews ran into the library, and returned with a guitar, on which I had heard her play the preceding evening. She then said she would give us a real old Christmas song; and, after striking the first notes of the air on the instrument, she began the very song which day for day one and twenty years before I had heard sung by Eleanor!—It was during the Christmas following our first acquaint-

ance,—and just when my affection for her was acquiring that engrossing and overwhelming character which afterwards so fatally distinguished it. I had never heard it since,—and now it thrilled to the very marrow in my bones. This was the completion of all, and it was more than I could bear.—While all were hanging on the sweet tones of the singer's voice, I stole from the room and hurried to bury myself in my own.

* * * * * *

Thus closed the first year after my return to my native country,—to my father's house. And what a year it was!—It had witnessed the extinction of the last hopes which ever rose within me! After the season of my deep despondency had passed, I had always looked *hither* as to a haven in which I should find, at the least, peace—and now I had reached it, it was a bed of thorns! Yes! it did indeed add new pangs to those which had so gnawed at my heart—it heaped upon me fresh sorrow where I had expected consolation. There is alas! but *one* place

where, under circumstances such as mine, repose is to be hoped with confidence ;—it is that where *all* "the weary are at rest." The heart in which the volcano of passion has once burned will be wasted and sterile for ever. The gentle flowers of contentment and peace will not bloom upon that scorched soil—nothing but the bitterest weeds will grow there. I now found to what an extremity this was the case with me. My sister seemed to have become aware of it also—for when, in conformity with the usage, she wished me "a *happy* new year"—her tone and manner plainly betokened that she saw I never could know another.

* * * * * *

END OF THE LAST FRAGMENT.

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